The True History of JOSHUA·DAVIDSON

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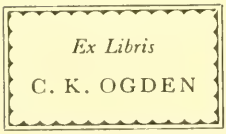

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THE TRUE HISTORY

OF

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THE TRUE HISTORY

OF

JOSHUA DAVIDSON

CHRISTIAN AND COMMUNIST

By E. LYNN LINTON

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CHAPTER I.

JOSHUA DAVIDSON was the only son of a village carpenter, born in the small hamlet of Trevalga on the North Cornwall coast, in the year 1835. His parents were poor but worthy people, who kept themselves very much together and had but little to do with the neighbours. Folks blamed this for pride, and said they held themselves high because they were the decayed branches of an ancient family -- some said dating from King Arthur's self. Of course this was only

an "Arthurian legend," if I may call it so, that could not be verified; for naturally down about Tintagel everything has to do with King Arthur — even the choughs. Joshua sometimes spoke of it, but not from pride; there never was a man freer from that failing than he; rather from the belief he had in what a learned man would call hereditary transmission, but as we say, just "in the blood," and a kind of idea that dawned on him, quite of late years, that there would be a revival of national glories, national names and leaders, under new aspects but from the ancient sources. And if so, might he not count for something, direct descendant as he believed he was of the hero whose Castle had been one of his earliest playgrounds, and on whose Quoit he had spent many an hour of way-side dream-

ing? It was a fancy; a harmless one; so let it pass for just as much as it was worth.

There was nothing very remarkable about Joshua's childhood. He was always a quiet, thoughtful boy, and from his earliest years noticeably pious. His parents came of the Friends' stock; not of a strict kind themselves, for they joined in the Church services; but the fact is just an indication of the kind of influences which helped to mould him in early youth. He had a habit of asking why, and of reasoning out a principle, from quite a little lad; which displeased people; so that he did not get all the credit from the schoolmaster and the clergyman to which his diligence and good conduct entitled him. They thought him troublesome, and some said he was self-conceited; which he never was; but

the more he was in earnest the more he offended them.

He was never well looked on by the Vicar since a famous scene that took place in the church one Sunday after afternoon catechism. He was then about fourteen years of age, and I have heard say he was a beautiful boy, with a face almost like a young woman's for purity and spirituality. He was so beautiful that some ladies and gentlemen staying at the Vicarage noticed him during church time, and said he looked like a boy-saint. But he knew nothing about himself. I question if he knew whether his hair was black like mine, or, as it was, a bright brown like ripe nuts in the sunshine. After catechism was over he stood out before the rest, just in his rough country clothes as he was, and said very respectfully to the

Vicar, Mr. Grand:* "If you please sir, I would like to ask you a few questions."

"Certainly, my lad, what have you to say?" said Mr. Grand rather shortly. He did not seem over well pleased at the boy's addressing him; but he could not well refuse to hear him because of the ladies and gentlemen with him, and especially Mr. Freeman, a very good old man who thought well of everybody, and let everybody do pretty much as they liked.

"If we say, sir, that Jesus Christ was God," said Joshua, "surely all that He said and did must be the real right? There cannot be a better way than His?"

* I do not mind giving this name of the clergyman, because it was not his own; only one that we lads gave him behind backs, as it were; else I do not intend to give the names of any living actors in this history. The scene I am now describing was told me by Joshua's mother, who wrote it down as soon as she got home.

"Surely not, my lad," Mr. Grand made answer; "what else have you been taught all your life? what else have you been saying in your catechism just now?"

"And His apostles and disciples, they showed the way too?" said Joshua.

"And they showed the way too, as you say; and if you come up to half they taught you'll do well, Joshua."

The Vicar laughed a little laugh as he said this; but it was a laugh, Joshua's mother said, that seemed to mean the same thing as a "scat"—our Cornish word for a blow—only the boy didn't seem to see it

"Yes; but, sir, it is not of myself I am thinking, it is of the world," said Joshua. "If we are Christians, why don't we live as Christians?"

"Ah indeed! why don't we!" said Mr.

Grand. "Because of the wickedness of the human heart; because of the world, the flesh, and the devil!"

"Then, sir, if you feel this, why don't you and all the clergy live like the apostles, and give what you have to the poor?" cried Joshua, clasping his hands and making a step forward, the tears in his eyes. "Why, when you read that verse, 'Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?' do you live in a fine house, and have grand dinners, and let Peggy Bray nearly starve in that old mud hut of hers, and widow Tregellis there, with her six children, and no fire or clothing for them? I can't make it out, sir! Christ was GOD; and we are Christians; yet we won't do as He ordered,

though you tell us it is a sin that can never be forgiven if we dispute what the Bible says."

"And so it is," said Mr. Grand sternly. "Who has been putting these bad thoughts into your head?"

"No one, sir. I have been thinking for myself. Michael, out by Lion's Den, is called an infidel; he calls himself one; and you preached last Sunday that no infidel can be saved; but Michael helped Peggy and her base child when the Orphan Fund people took away her pension, because, as you yourself told her, she was a bad woman, and it was encouraging wickedness; and he worked early and late for widow Tregellis and her children, and shared with them all he had, going short for them many a time. And I can't help thinking, sir, that Christ,

who forgave all manner of sinners, would have helped Peggy with her base child, and that Michael, being an infidel and such a good man, is something like that second son in the Parable who said he would not do his Lord's will when he was ordered, but who went all the same——"

"And that your Vicar is like the first?" interrupted Mr. Grand angrily.

"Well, yes, sir, if you please," said Joshua quite modestly but very fervently.

There was a great stir among the ladies and gentlemen when Joshua said this; and some laughed a little, under their breath because it was in church, and others lifted up their eyebrows, and said, "What an extraordinary boy!" and whispered together; but Mr. Grand was very angry, and said in a severe tone—

"These things are beyond the knowledge of an ignorant lad like you, Joshua; and I advise you, before you turn questioner and reformer, to learn a little humility and respect for your betters. I consider you have done a very impertinent thing to-day, and I shall mark you for it!"

"I did not mean to be impertinent, sir," said Joshua eagerly; "I want only to know the right of things from you, and to do as God has commanded, and Christ has shown us the way. And as you are our clergyman, and this is the House of God, I thought it the best plan to ask. I want only to know the truth; and I cannot make it out!"

"Hold your tongue, sir!" said Mr. Grand. "God has commanded you to obey your pastors and masters and all that are in

authority over you; so let us have no more of this folly. Believe as you are taught, and do as you are told, and don't set yourself up as an independent thinker in matters you understand no more than the ass you drive. Go back to your place, sir, and another time think twice before you speak to your superiors."

"I meant no harm. I meant only the truth and to hear the things of God," repeated Joshua sadly, as he took his seat among his companions; who tittered.

When they all went out of church Mr. Grand was heard to say to Mr. Freeman: "You will see, Freeman, that boy will go to the bad; he will turn out a pestilent fellow, a freethinker and a democrat. Oh, I know the breed, with their cant about truth and the right! He richly deserved a flogging to-day

if ever boy did; to dare to take me to task in my own church!"

But Mr. Freeman said gently; "I don't think he meant it for insolence. I think the lad was in earnest, though of course he should not have spoken as he did."

"Earnest or not, he must be taught better manners for the future," said Mr. Grand.

And so it was that Joshua was not well looked on by the clergyman, who was his enemy, as one may say, ever after.

All this made a great talk at the time, and there are many who remember the whole thing at this present day; as any one would find if they were to ask down at Trevalga; but all that Joshua was ever heard to say of it was: "I thought only of what was right in the sight of God; I never thought of man at all."

He did not however, repeat the experiment of asking inconvenient questions of his social superiors in public ; but it was noticed that after this he became more and more thoughtful, and more and more under the influence of a higher principle than lads of his age are usually troubled with. And though always tender to his parents and respectful to the schoolmaster and minister, and the like of that, yet he was less guided by what might be called expediency in his conduct, and more than ever a stickler for the uncompromising truth, and the life as lived by Jesus Christ. He was not uncomfortable to live with, his mother said ; quite the contrary ; no one ever saw him out of temper, and no one ever knew him do a bad thing ; but he somehow forced his parents to be always up to the mark, and

even the neighbours were ashamed to talk loosely or say what they shouldn't before a lad whose whole thought, whose sole endeavour was, "how to realise Christ."

"Mother," he once said, as he and Mrs. Davidson stood by the cottage door together, "I mean when I grow up to live as our Lord and Saviour lived when He was on the earth. For though he is God in Heaven he was only man here; and what He did we too can do with His help and the Holy Spirit's."

"He is our example, lad," said his mother reverently. "But I doubt lest you fall by over boldness."

"Then, if imitation is over bold, His life was a delusion, and He is not our example at all," said Joshua. "Which is a saying of the devil."

CHAPTER II.

JOSHUA did not leave home early. He wrought at his father's bench and was content to bide with his people. But his spirit was not dead if his life was uneventful. He gathered about him a few youths of his own age, and held with them prayer meetings and Bible readings, either at home in his father's house, or in the fields when the throng was too great for the cottage. It gave one a feeling as of old primitive times to be sitting there under the clear sky of a summer's evening, with the larks singing over head, and the swallows and sea birds

flashing through the air, the voice of the waves as they beat up against Long Island subdued to a tender murmur that seemed to have a mystery somehow in it, and the young carpenter reading to us of Christ, and praying for the power to be like unto Him in life and heart; praying with an earnestness, a realization, a very passion of entreaty—nay, I have never heard or seen aught like it since, in church or chapel either!

And then he himself was so unlike other boys. He was so upright, so steadfast! No one ever knew Joshua tell the shadow of a lie, or go back from his word, or play at pretence. And he had such an odd way of coming right home to us. He seemed to have felt all that we felt, and to have thought all our thoughts. Young as he was, he was our leader even then. We all looked

for great things from him. I should be laughed at if I said how high our expectations reached.

The youths that Joshua got together as his friends were as well-conditioned a set of lads as you would wish to see; sober, industrious, chaste. They were never in any trouble, and no one could say they had ever heard one of them give back a bad word, whatever the provocation, or say a loose one; but the clergy of their several parishes scouted them, and stood at no evil to say of them. For they were not church-goers; and that is always an offence to the clergy of country parishes, who treat even the best of the Dissenters as little better than rogues, taking it partly as a personal affront and partly as a moral sin if their parishioners find greater comfort for their poor souls else-

where than under them. However, for the matter of that, the lads were of no denomination; and though they prayed much and often, it was neither at church nor chapel; it was at their own houses or in the fields.

Their aim was to be thorough and like Christ. They denounced the sin of luxury among professing Christians, and spared no one, lay or clerical: so did Christ, they said. They set their faces against the priestly class altogether, and maintained that Christ as High Priest needed no subordinate or go-between, and that the modern parson was only the ancient Pharisee, whom Christ was never weary of denouncing. They were anti-Sabbatarians too, as He had been, and held the doctrine of freedom in Christ throughout. They believed implicitly every word of the Gospels, which they stood by as

fuller of the Divine Life than the Epistles, and they thought that the Example left the world was the one thing to follow and the one pattern to imitate. Joshua's great hope and desire, confessed among us, was to bring back the world to the simplicity and broad humanity of Christ's acted life; and as a believer in the divinity of that life, he could not understand how it had been let drop. His one central point was the same now as that which had formerly troubled him—and Mr. Grand; namely, how, if Christ was God, and His life given to us as our example, do we not follow it literally, in simple exactness, and as we find it set before us in the Gospels? And he believed that God would strengthen his hands, not only to enable him to realise this in his own person, but also to evangelise society, and bring it over to the

Truth along with him. He was waiting for a Sign; and he believed it would be given him.

He was but a young man at this time, remember; enthusiastic, with little or no scientific knowledge and with much of the logic of fanaticism; unable to judge between the possible and the impossible, and putting the direct interposition of God above the natural law. Wherefore, he accepted the text about faith removing mountains as literally true, and possible to be done. Given the faith, the mountain would move. And one evening he went down into the Rocky Valley, earnest to try conclusions with God's promise, and sure of proving it true. He had fasted all day, and he had prayed all day; not necessarily kneeling and repeating set forms, but in the whole attitude of his mind;

and in the twilight when work was over he went down with three of us, myself and two others, all certain that the truth of the Word would be made manifest, and that he could remove rocks by FAITH.

He prayed to God to grant us this manifestation—to redeem His promise. He was full of faith: not a shadow of doubt chilled or slacked him. As he stood there in the softening twilight, with his arms raised above his head and his face turned up to the sky, his countenance glowed as Moses' of old. He seemed inspired, transported beyond himself, beyond humanity. He commanded the stone to move in God's name, and because Christ had promised: and we knelt beside him, not so much trembling as exalted, feeling in the very presence of the Divine, and that He would do unto us

according to His word. But the rock stood still; and a stonechat went and perched on it.

Another time he took up a viper in his hand, quoting the passage, "They shall take up serpents." But the beast stung him, and he was ill for days after. So, when he ate a handful of the berries of the black briony, and all but died of the poison. Yet he had handled the viper and eaten the berries in faith as simple and sincere as when he had commanded the stone in the Rocky Valley to move.

When the doctor was called in, and Joshua told him, boylike, what he had done and why and in what spirit, he shook his head gravely, and told his mother he was mad and had better be looked after.

"No, no, not mad, sir, because I believe

the Bible, and have determined to lead a life after Christ's word and example," said Joshua.

"Tut! rubbish!" said the doctor. "What you've got to do, my lad, is to plane your wood smooth and make your joists firm. All this religious folly of yours has no sense in it. I tell you it will upset your brain, and that you are mad now, and will be madder if you don't pull up in time."

"So Festus said to St. Paul, sir; but he was not mad, nor am I."

"But what do you want to do, jackass?" said the doctor with a good-humoured kind of impatience. "What's amiss with your poor foolish head that you can't take things easy?"

"I want to find out which is true, sir,"

answered Joshua: "the Bible which ordains certain ways of life; or the Christian world which disobeys them. If Christ was God, there is but one way for us all. He could not have left us an imperfect example to be mended here and there as we think best for the convenience of society. He is God or man; for, as things are, it is not God and man—Christ and Christians; and I want to know which is the truth."

"Take my advice," said the doctor kindly; "put all these thoughts out of your head as quickly as you can. Get some work to do in a new part of the country, fall in love with some nice girl, and marry as soon as you can make a home for her. Give over reading the Bible for a time, and look up some pleasant stories and books of travel, and the like; and leave off

eating poison-berries and handling vipers. That's the only life for you, depend upon it; and though I am no theologian, I venture to say, that working honestly in that state of life to which it has pleased God to call you, going to church, keeping out of beer-shops, and living like your respectable neighbours, is a far better kind of thing than all this high-flown religion you are hankering after. Depend upon it, our best religion is to do our duty, and to leave the care of our souls to those whose business it is to look after them."

"Thank you, sir; you mean kindly," said Joshua. "But God has given me other thoughts, and I must obey them if I would not sin against the Holy Ghost."

And the doctor said afterwards to Mr. Grand, that he was quite touched at the lad's

sweetness and wrong-headedness combined, and would have given much to have been able to send him there and then to a lunatic asylum, where he might have been taken care of for a time and put to rights.

The failure of these trials of faith perplexed us all, and profoundly afflicted Joshua. Not many men have gone through greater spiritual anguish, I should suppose, than he did at this time. It was like the sudden darkening of the sun to him, and the doubt of himself which it brought was nearer madness than his simple faith had been. He passed through a bad time; when his soul went down into the Valley of the Shadow, if ever man's did! But in time he came out into the light again. He knew his own sincerity, and his entire acceptance

of the Word of God and of the Divinity of Christ; and he could not think that God had met his prayer with a rebuff. God, who knew the heart, would he felt sure have accepted his endeavour, had that endeavour been within the scope of His plan for humanity. It was the first struggle between Faith and Law, Revelation and Nature, through which every inquiring mind has to pass; and it was a bitter one.

He said nothing of these thoughts for many weeks. He was not a youth who jumped to conclusions, but rather one who pondered well, and who let his thoughts ripen; but at last he spoke one evening, when we were gathered together as usual, after work.

"Friends," he said, "it seems to me—

indeed. I think we must all see it now—that His Word is not to be accepted literally, and not to be acted on in all its details. The laws of Nature are supreme, and even faith cannot change them. Can it be," he then said solemnly, "that much of that Word is a parable?—that Christ was truly as he says of Himself, the corner stone, but not the whole building?—and that we have to carry on the work in His spirit, but in our own way, and not merely to try and repeat His acts?"

I do not think we were prepared for such a speech. We looked at one another uneasily, even the dimmest of us seeing something of the conclusions to which such a principle would lead us, and forecasting the rudderless wandering of souls that would ensue. But Joshua would say no more.

He bade us good-night soon after, and it was long before we renewed the subject. We all felt that he had broken dangerous ground; for had we not set out with the determination to realise Christ in our lives, founded on our conviction of the literalness, the absolute uncompromising truth of every word in the Gospels?—a truth not to be explained away, or paraphrased in any manner of worldly wisdom or expediency; but to be accepted crude, naked, entire as it is set down? It was one thing or the other—Christ or society, the Bible or the world. It could not be both; but once admit the right of choice, of criticism, and where was then our standard? Yet again, what could we make of that text about faith, when we had proved it for ourselves and found it wanting? And if wrong in

ever so small a matter, was not our theory of absolute infallibility at an end? But if absolute infallibility was at an end, was not that making Christ a mere temporary teacher, local and for the day—not universal and for all time; and God a bit by bit worker? And if so, and even Gospel revelation is not final, where then exists the absolute necessity of acceptance? Yet, if we came to this conclusion—sorrowfullest of all!—we must relinquish all anchorage everywhere, and do our best to piece together a theory of life for ourselves, glad if any of the broken fragments of faith might still serve us.

But we were far off, as yet, from any such conclusions; and the Christ life, and the Gospel narrative, and the need laid on us all to follow in the Master's steps, and be-

lieve as He taught, and do as He did, were still the cardinal points of Joshua's creed, and the object of his endeavours: and, with him, of ours.

CHAPTER III.

It was after this that we noticed a certain restlessness in Joshua. He seemed to feel the narrowness of his life down at such a dead place as Trevalga, where a man must work hard to keep body and soul together, and keep them very poorly when he has done his best; and where he cannot get forward save by his own thoughts. There is nothing for an energetic-minded young man to do there after his day's work is over. No lectures, no mechanics' institute, no library; only a few books to be borrowed here and there by chance. And Boscastle and Trevenna are

no farther advanced; nor was even Camelford in those days. And then Camelford is full five miles away, across a wild whisht country that does not invite much night walking. To be sure there are the cliffs and the sea, the waterfall up at Knighton's Kieve, the rocks and the old ruins at Tintagel—King Arthur's Castle—which fill the imagination. But imagination does very well for extreme youth, as looking back does for old age: a man coming to his prime wants action.

An opening however came in time, and Joshua had an offer to go up to London to follow his trade at a large house in the City; which he accepted; and got me a job as well, that I might be alongside of him. For we were like brothers; he, the elder, the better, the leader; and I, the younger, the led. And

neither was afraid of work; or, let me add, afraid for our work. We were skilled in our trade so far as we could be without first-rate teaching, having made it a point of duty and honour both, that we should never give folks occasion to talk of us as babbling saunterers, who took to the Bible because they could not manage the plane and the saw.

A few days before he went, Joshua happened to be coming out of his father's workshop just as Mr. Grand was passing, driving the neat pair-horse phaeton he had lately bought.

"Well, Joshua, and how are you doing?" said the parson, pulling up.

I dare say he was a good man when he was at home, but Mr. Grand was not fit to be a parish priest—at all events, not of such a place as Trevalga. He might have made

a fine general officer, or a dignitary in a cathedral where he had nothing to do with the poor; but among a lot of half-starving, uneducated creatures, such as you find in a by-kind of coast hamlet in Cornwall, he was worse than useless. He had no love for the poor, and no pity: he always called them "the common people," and spoke of them disdainfully, as if they were different creatures from gentry. I question if he allowed us the same kind of souls; and I do know that he denied equality of condition after death, and quoted the text of "many mansions" in proof of his theory of exclusion. He was a man of good family himself, and his wife was the daughter of a bishop; he was rich too, and looked to be made dean or bishop himself by time. So you see, Trevalga was only a stopping-place with him, where he

just put off the time the best way he could till he saw his way to better things; and he didn't care a rush for any one in the place.

However, he drew up at seeing Joshua, and asked him how he was; and then said: "And why have you not been to church lately, my man?" as if Joshua had been in the habit of going, and had failed only of late. This was Mr. Grand's way. He never knew anything about his people. That gave them to think, you see, that he held himself too high to notice what such poor wretches might be about. God forgive me if I misjudge him!

"Well, sir," said Joshua, "I don't go to church, you know."

"No? have you joined the chapel then? Is that your latest fad, Joshua?"

"No, sir; neither church nor chapel," answered Joshua.

"What! a new light on your own account, hey?" and he laughed as if he mocked him.

"No, sir, only a seeker."

"The old paths not good enough for you?—the light that has lightened the Gentiles these eighteen hundred years and more not pure enough for an unwashed Cornish lad, planing wood at a carpenter's bench, and not able to speak two consecutive words of good English?"

"I must answer for my conscience to God, sir," said Joshua.

"And your clergyman, appointed by God and the State to be your guide, what of him? Has he no authority in his own parish?" cried Mr. Grand warmly. "Does

it never strike you, my fine fellow, that in thinking for yourself, as you call it, you are flying in the face both of Divine ordinances and the laws of man, and that you are entering on the sin of schism on the one hand, and of rebellion on the other?"

"Look here, sir," said Joshua with earnestness, but quite respectfully; "if I speak plainly, I mean it for no offence; but my heart burns within me and I must speak out. I deny your appointment as a God-given leader of souls. The Church is but the old priesthood as it existed in the days of our Lord, and is, as much as that was, the blind leading the blind. There are good and kind gentlemen among you, but not Christians according to Christ. I see no sacrifice of the world, no brotherhood with the poor——"

"The poor!" interrupted Mr. Grand disdainfully; "what would you have, you young fool? The poor have the laws of their country to protect them, and the Gospel preached to them for their salvation."

"Yes, and in preaching that—that is, in giving two full services on Sundays, and reading the marriage-service and the burial-service and the like of that when you are wanted—you discharge your conscience of all other obligations towards them, and think you have done enough. You never seem to remember that when Christ preached the Gospel to the poor it was to make them equal with the rich. Why, sir, the poor of our day are the lepers of Christ's; and who among you, Christian priests, consorts with them? Who ranks the man above his station, or the soul above the man?"

"Now, we have come to it!" cried Mr. Grand. "I thought I should touch the secret spring at last! And you would like us to associate with you as equals?—Is that it, Joshua? Gentlemen and common men hob-and-nob together, and no distinctions made? You to ride in our carriages, and perhaps marry our daughters?"

He had his little girl of six or so in the phaeton with him; a pretty little maid that used to go about dressed in blue velvet and a white feather in her hat.

"That's just it, sir. You are gentlemen, as you say, but not the followers of Christ. If you were, you would have no carriages to ride in, and your daughters would be what Martha and Mary and Lydia and Dorcas were, women of no station, bent only on serving God and the saints, and their title

to ladyhood founded on their degrees of goodness."

"Going in for socialism, Joshua?" said Mr. Grand, continuing his bantering tone. "A little radicalism, a little methodism, and a great deal of self-assurance—that seems to me to be about where you are!"

"Going in for no isms at all, sir," said Joshua. "Only for the truth as it is in Christ!"

"Shall I tell you what would be the very thing for you?" said Mr. Grand quite quietly.

"Yes, sir; what?" asked Joshua eagerly.

"This whip across your shoulders!—and, by George, if I were not a clergyman I would lay it there, with a will!" cried the parson, half rising from his seat.

No one had ever seen Joshua angry since

he had grown up. His temper was proverbially sweet, and his self-control was a marvel. But this time he lost both. It was not so much as a man, because of the insult to himself; he would have borne that meekly enough; but it was the feeling that the Sacred Thing had been mocked in him which drove him into sudden anger: an anger so violent and so sudden as to take the clergyman fairly aback.

"God shall smite thee, thou whited wall!" he cried with vehemence. "Is this your boasted leadership of souls?—this your learned solving of difficulties?—this your fatherly guidance of your flock? 'Feed my lambs' —with what? with stones for bread—with insult for sincerity—with the gentleman's disdain for the poor thought of the artisan —with class insolence for spiritual diffi-

culties! Of a surety, Christ has to come again to repeat the work which you priests and churches have destroyed and made of no effect, and to strip you of your ill-used power. You are the gentleman, sir, and I am only a poor carpenter's son; but I stand against you now—man against man—soul against soul—and I spurn you with a deeper and more solemn scorn than you have spurned me!" He lifted his hand as he said this, with a strange and passionate gesture, then turned himself about and went in; and Mr. Grand drove off more his ill-wisher than before; as perhaps was only natural. And yet he richly deserved all he had got.

This was one of the stories that got bruited abroad to Joshua's discredit. Some said he had struck the parson—some that he

had been monstrously and unjustifiably impertinent; and the tale got bandied about as a kind of dramatic scarecrow—a kind of logical warning to young men given to think for themselves, as to what would become of them if they shook themselves free of authority. "You'll be as bad as Joshua to Parson Grand," was a phrase I myself heard more than once. But here is the story just as it happened; and I put it to my readers—was Joshua so very much to blame, all things considered—motives, feelings, spiritual disappointment, and that inner dignity of Man which overpowers all social differences when the fit moment comes? I can only say that never, to the last, could he be got to see that he had done wrong, and never, to the last, could I say it or see it either.

"No," he used to say, "some kinds of

anger are righteous; and this was of them."

But Mr. Grand made old Davidson, Joshua's father, suffer for his son; for he took away his own custom from him, and did him what harm in the neighbourhood a gentleman's ill-word can do a working man. It was a bad thing for the old man. The Trevalga schools were being built, and St. Juliot's church was under repair, and Davidson, as the best workman thereabouts, would have been sure to have been head man at both jobs. But Mr. Grand, he put his spoke in that wheel; and one day when I took courage to speak and plead, all I got was a recommendation to mind my own business, and not interfere where I was not wanted. And then as if in consideration—a kind of condescending consideration—for

my being a "canter." Mr. Grand wound up with saying that I must see he was justified according to the law of God.

When I challenged him hotly, I daresay intemperately, I daresay even impertinently, for his proof—for you see I was but a poor uneducated artisan, and he was a gentleman and a scholar—he laughed, and said he did not argue with carpenters' lads: and when I answered back, he ordered me out of the house, saying I was as pestilent a fellow as my friend;—I replying angrily that I did not think the pestilence rested with Joshua. Which ended the interview: not without loss of temper and dignity on both sides, and no good done to anyone.

The night before we left for London Joshua had a kind of vision or waking dream, which he told me as we were on our

way to Launceston, walking up the hill from Boscastle, while the omnibus toiled after us. He was on the cliff by Long Island, when suddenly he seemed to be caught away to a wide plain, where many men were gathered. In the centre of the plain was a hill, like Brown Willy out there by Camelford, and on this hill sat two kingly figures who ruled over the swarming multitudes below. They sat together hand in hand, and he saw that they were in some mysterious manner inseparable. The one was dressed as a high priest, and was Ecclesiastical Christianity; the other as a king, and was Society; and both were stern, forbidding, and oppressive. The only persons to whom they showed favour were the well-dressed and the subservient—rich people dressed in gold and jewels, and

the poor and undistinguished who were submissive and conforming; who accepted all that the high priest taught without questioning the truth of any part, and who obeyed what the king ordained without even so much as a wish to resist. These were called Believing Christians and Respectable Members of Society; and, in consideration of their obedience, both the high priest and the king smiled on them, and spoke them fair. Yet they were scarcely friendly to their adherents. The one surrounded them with the most monstrous shapes of demons cast by magic lanterns and in every way unreal, of which they were in continual fear—GOD, whom yet they labelled "Our Father," and the "God of Love," the most terrible looking demon of all; and the more they were afraid, and the more

cruel they believed Our Father to be, the more Ecclesiastical Christianity was content. The other bound them round and round with chains and swathing bands, till they were scarcely able to move or breathe. And when they submitted to the stifling torture with a good grace—some of them even drawing the links tighter, and buckling up the thongs more home of their own accord, and all declaring the pattern of each particular bandage to have been sent down direct from heaven, and in no wise invented as an experiment by Society—then the king smiled on them kindly, and praised them with many flattering words; and the poor atrophied wretches were quite content with the barren honour of their reward.

At the feet of these two rulers lay three figures cruelly bound and tortured. They

were Truth, bearing in her arms her young child Science, Freedom, and Humanity. All three were stretched on racks made in the form of a cross, which gave in the eyes of the multitude a kind of symbolic sanction to their torture. The two rulers were for ever trying to gag them, so that they should not speak ; but they could not quite succeed ; and every now and then they uttered words, loud and clear as the sound of a silver trumpet, that stirred the multitude below, and set men running hither and thither, some shaking themselves free of the bonds in which both Christianity and Society had bound them. And when they spoke, the high priest and the king and their worshippers, all the well-dressed little kings and poorer conformists, buffeted them ; and would have killed them if they could.

Ill-treated as they were however, each tortured being had a small knot of adherents. Round Truth, bearing her young child, Science, gathered men of imposing aspect—men of authority, of large brains, of temperate nature, of clear and candid thought. There were some among them of such unquestionable grandeur, that even the mob of Believing Christians and Respectable Members of Society paid them a certain cold, deprecatory reverence as they passed; while Ecclesiastical Christianity tried to reconcile their statements with his own creed, hiding his magic lantern painted with demons and that all-devouring hell with which he terrified the multitudes, when he spoke to them; saying, "See, there is no such great difference between us after all! I do not contradict you. Say what you will about the

sun, and the age of the earth, the relations of the universe, and the gradual evolution of man, nothing that you advance disturbs me. I only supplement you, and add the divine grace of spiritual truth, which is beyond your analysis. You are right and I am right; let us be friends and brothers."

Society was less concerned about these philosophers. They were for the most part swathed in *his* bands tight enough; some for pre-occupation with other matters, some for expediency, some for dread of the unknown, and some for conviction; and, for the rest, he let his twin-brother, the high priest, fight his battles as he best could.

Round the prostrate form of Freedom, scarred, gashed, bleeding, fettered, stood only a few. Even the men of science were

afraid of this huge giant, this son of the old gods, whose might no one had been able to calculate should he once arise in his strength. All, save his own few lovers, chiefly of the poorest class, looked on him with dread, and prophesied evil days for the world should he ever get free of his bonds and the symbolic constraint of the cross. But his small band of lovers, themselves either martyrs or victims, worked incessantly at his deliverance; every now and then getting one link loosened here and another there, knowing that in time he would with their help shake himself free of all his chains, and stand up before the world, the great-hearted leader, the glad possession of every man and woman that breathes.

The third figure was the most deeply oppressed. The face was hidden, but it was

a lovely form, vilely clad in disfiguring garments, and bespattered with dirt that had been flung at it by the high priest and Society in concert. On its nailed hands hung the weeping and the miserable; and no one was rejected or bidden back. The most miserable sinner that crawled—the thief, the murderer, the harlot—it gathered them all around it; its own bound hands doing their checked best to free them from their stains. Pleasure and pain and sin and virtue all rested equally on its large breast, and to all it gave full sympathy and understanding. It condemned no one; only it refused obedience to the high priest and the king. As the dreamer looked, it slowly turned its face to the sky: and Joshua recognised in the soiled and vilified face of Humanity—the face of Christ.

Suddenly standing side by side with the magnificently attired pontiff, this Ecclesiastical Christianity, oppressor of Truth, slanderer of Humanity, tyrant of Freedom, ruler of the churches, and through them of the consciences of men; side by side too, with his twin-brother Society, his fellow-tyrant and oppressor, was a man coarsely clad in rude garments, a man of uncultured speech, of unconventional manners, but of a noble aspect, whose face was the face of an enthusiast who believed in himself, and in whose self-reliance were his sole credentials. His companions were the same as those who had gathered round the crucified form of Humanity. All the poor and the miserable, the leprous, the sinners, the outcast, and those "sinless Cains" of history, those men who had lived to do good

to their generation, and who had been stoned and crucified and blasphemed and cursed as their reward—they were all clustered closely round him. He had nothing to do with that regal Society, that mitred Christianity. He loudly proclaimed his antagonism to both, and drew to him only such as they spurned and rejected.

He pointed to the high priest: "Look," he said to Joshua, "what they have made of me; of an unskilled artisan, no schoolman even of his day, and a vagrant preacher living by charity, they have made a king; of a man, a god; of a preacher of universal tolerance, the head of a persecuting religion; of a life, a dogma; of an example, a church. Here am I, Jesus the Nazarene, the son of Joseph and Mary, as I lived on earth; poor, unlearned, a plebeian, and a socialist, at war

with the gentlemen and ladies of my society, the enemy of forms, of creeds, of the priestly class of respectabilities ; and there you see my modern travesty, this jewelled, ornate, exclusive Ecclesiastical Christianity, who is the ancient Pharisee revived. To you, and to such as you, is given the task of bringing men back to the creed that I preached. And if in securing the essence of the creed you forget the Founder, and call my doctrine by another name than mine, so be it. The world wants the thing, not the label ; and Christ-likeness, not Ecclesiastical Christianity, is the best Saviour of men."

As he said this the whole vision seemed to fade away, and the voice of Peggy Bray, whining and drunk, with Mr. Grand's deep tones of angry disgust, broke the quiet

evening stillness, and brought Joshua back to the realities of life.

"Something seemed to bid me," he said, when he told me the story: "I ran off over the down as fast as I could, and caught Peggy on the Tintagel Road. She was drunk, dirty, and crying. I took her by the hand. 'Peggy, woman,' I said, 'dry your eyes, and come along with me.' I spoke so sudden, I startled her, and so a little sobered her. Then I took her by the arm and led her to mother's cottage. 'Here, mother,' I said; 'here is a bit of Christ-work for you to do. Take this poor creature, in her dirt and vileness as she is, and cleanse her. You believe and know that God's love did that for the world: we are less pure than Christ, but we hold ourselves too fine to follow His example in that! Love her,

mother; she is your sister—and maybe your love can heal her.' Poor mother! she didn't like the task. She cried over it, and said that I put a burden on her she could not bear; but I held to my point," said Joshua, with a glowing face; "and she yielded. Peggy stayed in our house for over a month, and mother was ill-called for her work. Not that she much cared, I fancy. I don't know, however, whether she did or not; she never said much. And though Peggy broke out again and went to the bad as before, yet a month's experience of loving-kindness and cleanly living was something. At all events, it was practical Christianity; and if it did Peggy herself little or no good permanently, it was the right thing to do, and mother was so far benefited."

CHAPTER IV.

In London a new view of life opened to Joshua altogether. The first thing that struck him in our workshop was the avowed infidelity of the workmen, with the indifference so many of them showed for any spiritual life at all. Having apparently made up their minds that Christianity, as taught by the churches and practised in high places, is a humbug throughout, they seemed to have stopped there, not caring to go farther, nor to find a truer and better religion for themselves. Distrust had penetrated to their in-

most souls, and God was abandoned because man had betrayed them. Some of the better class among them had become Unitarians; which gave them the most religion with the least dogma of all the sects that go by the name of Christian; and some had transferred their whole passion and life of thought and intellectual energy to science, finding that consolation in nature which they could not get from revelation. But very few were what is called religious men: that is, men believing in the Bible, going to church on Sundays, and reverencing the clergy as men placed over them by a higher power to guide their souls as they would.

The immense gulf existing between the church and the workmen also surprised the Cornish lad. At home, though the cottagers and the clergy stood as wide as the poles

apart, socially and intellectually, yet there was some kind of mutual knowledge and intercourse; which, if it meant little for human wants and less for spiritual needs, still was intercourse and knowledge. In London there was none; or so little in proportion to the work to be done, it seemed almost as good as none. The parish priest, save in some chiefly ritualistic exceptions, scarcely exists, and his place is supplied by all sorts of lieutenants, both authorised and irregular; by Bible women, the City missionaries, Baptists, Roman Catholics, and the thousand and one odd, obscure sectaries of whom no one in good society ever heard the names — anything rather than the fashionable preacher who has invested all his store of godliness in his sermons, or the beneficed clergyman who thinks his East-end

income dearly bought at the price of his East-end residence.

As he grew however, to understand the inner relations of life in the metropolis, he ceased to wonder at the wide-spread indifferentism of the working men; and he came further to understand how religion, like other things, had followed that class antagonism felt by the artisan, to which the exclusiveness of caste cherished by the rich had given birth. Christianity represents to the poor, not Christ tender to the sinful, visiting the leprous, the brother of publicans, at whose feet sat the harlots and were comforted, but the bishop in his palace and the parson in his grand house, the gentleman taking sides with God against the poor and oppressed, as an elder brother in the courts of heaven kicking the younger out of doors. It is in

fact, he used to say, antagonism not love; Cain not Christ.

His religious experiences followed the natural course of such a mind as his, at once so earnest and so logical. Attracted by the self-sacrificing lives of so many of the Ritualist party, he threw himself with ardour into the congregation of a noted City priest whose name I do not feel justified in giving, as I have not asked his consent. If, however, he should read these pages he will remember Joshua Davidson well enough. The Superior, as he was called, took to him greatly, and Joshua felt all the charm of close intercourse with a cultivated mind. It was the first time this great good had been granted him, and it was like a new life to him. At one time I thought he would have abandoned the independent line he had

chosen and would have gone over to the High Church party; but I do not think now that he was ever very near. For, fascinated as he was with the earnestness and culture of the Superior and his colleagues, they failed to hold him mainly because of the largeness of their assertions, the smallness of their proofs, and the feeling he had that more lay behind their position than they acknowledged, and that they used their adherents as tools. Added to which, their devotion to the Church rather than to Christianity at large, the absorption of the human example of Christ in His mystical character, the deification of the man as He lived, as if He had walked about like a God with a halo round His head, and was not a real man of the people of his time—of lowly birth, of confessed scientific ignorance, in antagonism to all the wealth and

culture, and class-refinement and political economy of His day, fighting the cause of the poor against the rich, of the outcast against the aristocrats, just as any earnest democrat, any single-hearted communist, might be doing at the present day—all this repelled him from close union ; and all this made him feel that, great and good as the men themselves are, in the High Church movement was not his Shekinah. Then again, their elaborate system of symbolism seemed to him puerile ; a playing with spiritual toys that had less reality than ingenuity ; and their central creed of sacrifice rather than commemoration in the Eucharist, backed by their assumption of a priesthood possessing unproved and mysterious powers, failed to convince him.

" You have captivated my heart," he one

day said to the Superior—"you charm my tastes—you delight my imagination; but you have not mastered my reason. Fairly reasoned out I do not think your position is tenable. You are Roman Catholics under another name; irregulars claiming to be received on the footing of the acknowledged Body Guard; you are infallible yet eclectic, and I cannot concede infallibility to eclecticism."

"But have you no reverence for the virtues of obedience and humility?" asked the Superior. "Cannot you quell that questioning spirit of yours for the sake of the Church's honour, and to maintain a close front? Who can hope to do anything as an isolated unit against a host? Is not the whole secret of strength in organisation?"

"But I cannot become part of a system

for expediency!" said Joshua mournfully. "Some men may, but it is not given to me to be able to stifle my own individual conscience for any considerations of party strength. I have got it to do—to find out if practical Christianity is possible in the world, and to learn why, being Christians, we are not of Christ. I know I should get something of the kind in such institutions as St. Vincent de Paul and the like, but I should have there so much in excess of the simple faith I love, that I cannot join them. I must go on my way alone."

"And you will fail," said the Superior. "No one man can succeed in such a search as yours. Guided by wise counsels and supported by authority you might come to satisfactory conclusions; but adrift on the wide sea of dissent, and private opinion, and indi-

vidual interpretation, you are lost. To the Church came the promise and the Spirit; believe me the Church is your only ark."

"If any, then the Roman Catholic at once, frankly and without reserve," said Joshua. "If the keys of life and death are held by a governing body, they are surely held within the Vatican; and if I must enter into the virtue of unquestioning obedience, I would rather accept it in its totality. Your ritualism seems to me like Canute and the waves. 'Thus far and no farther,' you say to private inquiry; and 'only so much and so much will we take of tradition and the vitality of past ages.' Where is your standing-point? where your logical foothold? By what authority do you reject and accept at will? and by what mea-

sure do you set the length of the tether of reason ?"

"If you are for the whole history of the Church you must read more closely than you have done," said the Superior a little evasively.

"Forgive me, sir," continued Joshua earnestly; "I know you will, whatever I say; for I am speaking now heart-open, man to man, and there is no question of discourtesy or of courtesy; but with all my personal love and admiration for the professors of your creed, the creed itself is tainted with an insincerity I cannot digest. And your position, standing as you do in the front, between yearning souls demanding the support of authority, the moral protection of infallibility, and the only Western Church that can give it logically, is, to my

way of thinking, both dangerous to yourselves and cruel to the people. Why do you not go over to Rome at once, sir, since your commission is self-appointed and irregular?"

The Superior smiled gently. "I never argue," he said; "for I never found any good to come of it. These questions are matters for spiritual reception, not dialectical discussion. Use the appointed means and the grace of our Lord will find you."

"I have used them; I do use them; and yet I cannot get conviction," Joshua made answer, as sorrowfully as frankly.

"Persevere!" said the Superior solemnly; "the promises of God never failed yet."

Joshua did not speak. He remembered his trial of the material promises and how

they failed; but he did not go into that with the Superior. He had learnt to look back on the phase through which he had passed then as a boyish craze, sincere if you will, but a craze all the same. Yet it had struck into him, and, perhaps unknown to himself how much, had helped greatly to modify his views. It had broken down his belief in the literal exactness of the Scriptures, and the science-lectures he attended went the same way; and when one's child-like confidence has received its first shock, it is long before anything like an analogous faith is reconstructed out of more mature knowledge.

At this time Joshua's mind was like an unpiloted vessel. He was beset with doubts, in which the only thing that kept its shape or place was the character of

Christ. For the rest, everything had failed him.

"What," he said to me at this time, "if the spiritual life is as little real as that act of faith in which we all failed?—if what we call conviction is only a state of the mind—a subjective condition owning no absolute without—a state as good and righteous for the Buddhist, for the Mohammedan, for the Hindoo, as for the various Christian denominations? We are all convinced. Every creed has had its martyrs and enthusiasts and its well-trained, well-balanced professors, all as firmly convinced of its truth and of its being the one truth only, as the Superior is convinced of the absolute rightness of Anglicanism, as the Pope believes in the infallibility of his Church, and the whole Christian world in

the impregnability of the Bible and its literal exactness. I cannot focus God as these men are able to do; and yet I feel it better to be rooted than wandering, as I am wandering now, unfixed and unnourished. If you are rooted you can grow; but floating, hovering, what is the soul but as one of those winged seeds carried about by the wind and fastened nowhere?"

"And yet," I answered, "it is better to be unfastened from a fallacy than to be rooted on it. There must be the moment of suspension when you are in progress. To mount a ladder you must leave the rung on which you stand, and before you have your foot on the other it is nowhere—only in space. The time of doubt is a time of pain, but it must be passed through if we would believe the better thing. To have lost the

old land-marks—left them behind us—is not necessarily to have lost the right way, Joshua!"

"Ah! but to have been so near to God as I once felt myself—to have lived in the light—and now to be so far off—to be in darkness and alone!" he sighed.

"The darkest hour is that before dawn," was my reply. "Even at this moment God may be preparing you for conviction."

I do not think that what is called the Evangelical school ever warmed Joshua as the Ritualists had done. If the assumptions of the Church, clad in her venerable authority, seemed to him excessive, the assumptions of sectarianism, where each man is an independent pope and quite as bigoted as the real one, were more so. And he could

not come to believe that faith, which is a thing we cannot give ourselves, which will not come for the seeking, and which, when we have it, is as likely to lead us wrong as right—unless all beliefs are true alike; which sectarianism does not admit—is the one sole means of salvation, without which we are lost. It seemed to him a theory entangled in contradictions. Faith is the gift of God; no one can believe at will, but only as God gives him grace to do so; but if you do not believe you are damned, and God punishes you for not having what He will not bestow. Again, you have to distinguish between your various kinds of faith, and you must discern accurately which kind is sent by God and which by the devil. No outward test can tell you: for the Calvinist holds the Romanist in deadly error; the Romanist damns

the heretic with no hope of mercy; the Anglican talks about the deadly sin of dissent; and not one of them all regards the Unitarian, the Jew, or the Pagan, as in any sort of possibility a child of God, or as aught but a confirmed, if unconscious, son of the devil. What known test then can be applied to all these conflicting schools? To Joshua's mind, none; and the more he sought for the unerring truth—truth centralised, unified, focussed—the less, it seemed to him, he found it, and the more dignity and grandeur and charity he felt resided in the wide creed of Universalism.

During this time he did not neglect what I suppose may be called secular life. He attended all such science-classes as he had time for; and being naturally quick in study, he picked up a vast deal of knowledge in a

very short time; he interested himself in politics, in current social questions, specially those relating to labour and capital, and in the condition of the poor. This, above all, was his main subject; and perhaps more than any thing else, the fact that all the sects and denominations he had searched into accepted the class divisions of the present time as final, and thought that it was enough to preach the Gospel to the poor—that is, to preach to them submission and patience, and belief that Christ was God, and then leave them to their physical wretchedness and social degradation as to things that must be, and with which they must make themselves content—had turned him from communion with them, one and all. It was such a comfortable way of getting rid of a difficulty, he used to say. It

was offering a potential heaven as a bribe to induce the starving and the down-trodden to be patient with their sufferings, and submissive to the unjust tyranny of circumstances. It was shirking the question of Christian equality altogether, and nullifying the whole teaching and tendency of Christ's life.

So his time passed, and his thoughts went more and more into the rationalistic channel; till at last one evening, when I and other of his friends were sitting with him, he made his declaration.

"Friends," he said, "I have at last cleared my mind and come to a Belief. I have proved to myself the sole meaning of Christ: it is Humanity. I relinquish the miracles, the doctrine of the Atonement, the doctrine of the Divinity of Jesus, and the

unelastic finality of His knowledge. He was the product of His time; and if He went beyond it in some things, He was only abreast of it in others. His views of human life were oriental; His images are drawn from the autocratic despotism of the great and the slavish submission of the humble, and there is never a word of reprobation of these conditions, as conditions, only of the individuals according to their desert. He did His best to remedy that injustice, so far as there might be solace in thought, by proclaiming the spiritual equality of all men, and the greater value of worth than status; but He left the social question where he found it—paying tribute even to Cæsar without reluctance—His mind not being ripe to accept the idea of a radical revolution, and His hands not strong enough to accomplish it, if even

He had imagined it. But neither He nor His disciples imagined more than the communism of their own sect; they did not touch the throne of Cæsar, or the power of the hereditary irresponsible Lord. Their communism never aimed at the equalization of classes throughout all society. Hence, I cannot accept the beginning of Christian politics as final, but hold that we have to carry on the work under different forms. The modern Christ would be a politician. His aim would be to raise the whole platform of society, he would not try to make the poor contented with a lot in which they cannot be much better than savages or brutes. He would work at the destruction of caste, which is the vice at the root of all our creeds and institutions. He would not content himself with denouncing sin as merely spiritual evil: he

would go into its economic causes, and destroy the flower by cutting at the roots—poverty and ignorance. He would accept the truths of science, and he would teach that a man saves his own soul best by helping his neighbour. That, indeed, He did teach ; and that is the one solid foothold I have. Friends, Christianity according to Christ is the creed of human progress, not that of resignation to the avoidable miseries of class ; it is the confession that society is elastic, and that no social arrangements are final ; that morals themselves are only experimental, and that no laws are divine—that is, absolute and unchangeable by circumstance. It is the doctrine of evolution, of growth ; and just as Christ was the starting-point of a new era of theological thought, so is the present the starting-point of a new era of social fact.

Let us then strip our Christianity of all the mythology, the fetichism that has grown about it. Let us abandon the idolatry with which we have obscured the meaning of the Life; let us go back to the MAN, and carry on His work in its essential spirit in the direction suited to our times and social conditions. Those of you who still cling to the mystical aspect of the creed, and who prefer to worship the God rather than imitate the Man, must here part company with me. You know that, as a youth, I went deep into the life of prayer and faith; as a man, I have come out into the upper air of action; into the understanding that Christianity is not a creed as dogmatised by churches, but an organization having politics for its means and the equalization of classes as its end. It is Communism. Friends! the doc-

trine I have chosen for myself is Christian Communism—and my aim will be, the Life after Christ in the service of humanity, without distinction of persons or morals. The Man Jesus is my master, and by His example I will walk."

CHAPTER V.

THESE then were the stages through which Joshua's mind had passed; first, literal acceptance of the Word, which as he went on he found to be against the laws of nature, and which therefore he relegated to the ignorance and exaggeration of the time in which it was written; next, the authority of the Church with its increment of symbolism and tradition, by which the Humanity of Jesus is resolved into a mystical Appearance of Divinity, and his Life made no longer an example for men to follow but a dogma to

be worshipped under emblems; and now the frank acceptance of that Humanity alone, of the Man as a teacher, and of the Life as an example to be faithfully followed; more especially in its tenderness to sinners and its brotherhood with the poor and outcast. It was an abandonment of the dead mystical for the living real; but I doubt if any single sect among all the hundreds into which the Christianity of Jesus is shredded, would have recognised him as a brother Christian, or have believed that Christ would do aught else to him in the Last Day but deny him as a "thief and a robber."

And now Joshua began to carry out his programme of life with more fixed lines. He disdained nothing that could advance him in knowledge and intellectual strength; and I have often heard him say that the

great marvels of science, such as were shown us in the lectures to working men that we attended, stirred his soul to religious feeling just like the passion of prayer. And what he knew and valued for himself, that he was eager to impart to others. And it was this which made him begin his "night school," where he got together all who would come, and tried to interest them in some of the more taking "fairy tales of science," as well as to teach them a few homely truths in the way of cleanliness, health, good cooking, and the like; with interludes, so to speak, of lessons in morality; winding up with a few simple prayers and an attempt to make his hearers feel the Presence and the Power of God. All came to this meeting who would; thieves and drunkards, lost women and gutter-children—no matter who: there was a

kindly welcome for all; no preaching at them for their sins; no expression of spiritual or moral superiority, but just the great loving equality which does the degraded so much good, and gives them, if only for a moment, a flash of natural self-respect and the glorious sense of inclusion and brotherhood. So that you see his life was not a meagre one; and while he blessed others so far as his power went, he grew daily riper in his own thoughts, and fuller of knowledge, and more clear as to what he meant.

We were very poor all this time: that of course we understood we must be. We were accustomed to it, and would have been more embarrassed with a lot of surplus money to spend, if we had had to spend it on ourselves, than we were to make the best of the little we

possessed. But we did look to live like decent men, and not like savages. And we desired the same for our order. Yet how was that possible in the conditions in which we found ourselves? And we were only two out of thousands.

We lodged in a stifling court, Church-court, where every room was filled as if cubic inches were gold, as indeed they are to London house-owners, if human life is but dross. Children swarmed like rabbits in every house, and died like sheep with the rot. It was sore to see them, poor little, pale, stunted, half-naked creatures, playing about the foul uncleansed pavement of the court, from the reeking gutter of which they picked up apple-parings, potato-peelings, fish-heads, and the like, which I have seen them many a time wipe on their rags

and eat. "The bronchitis" it was called that sent so many of them to the hospital and the graveyard, but the real word was poverty: poverty in everything; in food, in clothing, in care, in lodging. It made one's heart ache to see them—them and their parents too: the hopeless misery of their lives and the moral degradation following. And it made one think with deep amazement of what the wisdom of that nation could be which leaves its riches to rot in the gutter for want of looking after and tending; not to speak of the religion, which contents itself with building churches, and endowing foreign and colonial bishoprics, while its own immortal souls perish for lack of the Bread of Life squandered in baskets full on the altars to Baal! Where to find the issue? How to fill up the great chasm between the

rich and the poor, the virtuous and the vicious, the learned and the ignorant, the civilised and the brutish?

"There is only one way out of it," said a noted M.P. to Joshua one day, a great political economist and a strict Malthusian: "abstinence; if you wish to see the poor raised you must lighten the labour market by bringing fewer labourers into it. That is the first necessity. Leave off having children, live frugally, and put by money, and as many of you can, emigrate."

"Is this not omitting one important factor from your calculations, sir?" said Joshua.

"What do you mean?" asked Mr. ——.

"Merely the human nature there is in humanity," said Joshua. "Do you think the poor have no instincts? Is not a wife

or a husband, a home where there are little children, sometimes a day's pleasure, and the old family ties of father and mother and brothers and sisters—are not all these as dear to them as to the rich? Why should they be required to forego these that the rich may not be called upon to share?"

"Would you destroy the existing order of society?" said the M.P. sternly.

"Destroy it? aye! root and branch, if need be! In no civilised community—not to speak of a Christian one, if Christianity meant anything—ought there to be such places as Belgrave-square and Church-court. Keep your Belgrave-square by all means, but let the Church-courts be made at least wholesome and decent."

"You have the remedy in your own hands," said the M.P. "So long as you

will marry on nothing, spend all you get, and breed paupers, paupers you must remain, wallowing in filth and wretchedness. The whole question is as much a matter of exact science as any other mathematical problem; and you are to blame, Davidson, that you do not abandon your foolish rant about Christian charity and human rights, and apply yourself to the only way out of the difficulty—the science of Political Economy."

Joshua smiled sadly. "Political Economy is not quite human enough for us, sir," he said. "It rests too on the basis of these very existing conditions of society that I do not care for; I would rather see something more radical, going straight to the root of the evil."

"You are an enthusiast," said the M. P. coldly. "I tell you again, Political Economy

does go to the root of the evil; and the only thing that does."

"Then Christianity is wrong," said Joshua.

And the M.P. was silent. He had never confessed himself on the subject of religion, and never would. Not his most intimate friends knew what he believed or what he did not believe. All that the world saw was that he went to church, made the orthodox bow at the Name in the Creed, and wrote books and pamphlets full of anti-Christian, hard-headed doctrines, without ever once alluding to religious dogma. When he was called an infidel by his foes he hit out savagely, and said, "Prove it." And no man could: only every man felt that his whole teaching, from first to last, was absolutely devoid of all Christian feeling; that pity, charity, warmth, and love

were as far from him as heaven is from the earth; and that he squared the accounts of humanity with the most sublime unconsciousness that such disturbing elements as passions or the sentiment of rights existed to upset his sums and prove his sociology for the present at least imperfect.

And the result of the conversation was, that Mr. ——, the M.P., who is a worthy man, upright and honourable, but practically one-sided because so utterly undisturbed by weakness or passions of any kind, and therefore unable to allow for them in another, denounced Joshua as a mischievous agitator and an ignorant fanatic, and warned those of us whom he knew to beware of him. Yet Mr. —— was as hearty as Joshua himself in his desire to see the regeneration of the working class: but as Joshua said, and I

thought said well too; "He advocates our making ourselves so slender that we can slip through our bands and fetters, while I hold that we should make ourselves strong enough to force those who hold the fastenings to loosen them. We both mean the same thing in the end, liberty and social advancement; but we differ as to the means."

Our court was one of just ordinary moral character, neither strictly respectable nor the reverse. We had all sorts; from the man who would harbour a pal in trouble and stow away swag not honestly come by till the police scent grew cold, to the decent workman doing his best to be respectable, and to keep his girls pure and his boys honest; from the hard working-woman slaving night and day to make her two poor ends meet, to the idle slattern who was drunk

half her time, and begged in the streets the other half; from the fond mother with her pretty pride in Sunday frocks or bits of coloured bows, to the husbandless wench whose half-starved children, as naked as crows and nearly as black, were knocked about as if they were street dogs, and on the highway to the gallows through neglect; from the virtuous spinster proud of her character and intolerant of looseness, to the poor flaunting girl who got her living in the streets, leastwise eked out her scanty wages from slopwork and the like by prostitution, more or less avowed.

One of these girls lived just opposite to us. Her name was Mary Prinsep. We had seen her at a music-hall we went to by times: for Joshua was not one of those prudes who are afraid of ap-

pearances, and as he wanted to learn the world on all sides he went to all sorts of places and talked to all sorts of people—to these poor girls, as well as to any one else, and just as he would to any one else; seeking to know the causes of things, and why they went on to the streets, and if they would keep out of them if they could, and so on.

Any one who knows anything about us working men as we are and not by fancy portraits, knows the profound contempt, and more, in which as a class we hold the professed prostitute, or the woman of our own homes who lets herself be seduced by a gentleman. A base child—nay, more than one, and by different fathers too—if by men of our own class is not so unpardonable an offence. We think it a pity, of course, and

we would rather not have it happen to our daughters and sisters; but we get over it: and the women not unfrequently marry, and marry well, when the thing has blown by a little. But the poor, painted, bedizened wreck of womanhood who goes about the streets at the West-end, and sells herself to club-gentlemen and the like, is of all things that of which we have the most abhorrence. I don't pretend to explain it, and very likely it is only a matter of class jealousy when all is said and done; but I mention it as a kind of introduction to what I have to say of Mary Prinsep. I want it to be seen that it was no indifferentism to her trade which actuated Joshua; but, on the contrary, that it was the large and generous humanity in him which made him able to accept even a street-walker as his sister and his friend.

Mary was very young and very ignorant. She had been brought up any how, and had been neglected and untaught from the beginning. There was no romantic history attached to her. She was no "soiled dove" whose feathers had once been white and shining; she was the daughter of a dram-drinking charwoman, sent out to mind children when quite a child herself, brought up to no trade, and knowing nothing now but the streets and the music-halls. But she had so much to the good, that she did not drink—at least not much—they all drink some; and she had never been in trouble or locked up. She was merely one of the abandoned—abandoned by society from her birth, and left to sink or swim in the foul streams of the metropolis as she best could. She had been picked up by a gentleman a

few years ago when she was about fifteen; and he had taught her a good deal both of refinement and womanly ways. She had been grateful to him at the time, but she scarcely loved him. He was older than herself; in fact, an old man comparatively; married, with grown-up daughters and sons, a churchwarden, and a fine Christian gentleman living out at Bayswater in the very odour of class respectability. But he had an eye for pretty girls; and he had placed Mary in a little house at Bow, where, as I said, she had learned some things that were useful to her, being a girl of great natural quickness, and, if she had had fair play, of refined taste and good disposition. In time he got tired of her. Such men always do: for what was there in an ignorant girl like that to keep him when he had had enough of

her beauty? So, making her a handsome present—oh! he behaved to her quite handsomely!—he parted with her, and Mary had to turn out into the streets with a ruined character and a taste for good living. She had learned however, during her two or three years of "protection," to keep herself and her place tidy, and to do needlework after a fashion, but not sufficiently well to keep her. Twelve hours a day of slop-work would not feed, clothe, and lodge her; flower-selling would not; but her youth and good looks would. So she sold them, as all she had to sell; and got bread of the devil's baking because she could not get it any way else.

It was a bad life; and she felt it was. And it was a hard life too. Those who see these girls only in their show-hours, dressed in the height of the fashion and queening it at

night-houses and the like, have no idea of the wretchedness of the reality for the poorer kind; for there are classes even here. No wonder they take to drink, poor souls, suffering as they do—merciful Heaven, how they do suffer! And how some of them loathe their lives as they go on, and go down, and wish they had died before they took up the trade! Not that I say for an instant they go moaning about in eternal agonies of remorse or horror—human nature does not live at such high pressure; but a lot of them do hate their business nevertheless, when the drink is not in them and their vanity is not flattered.

But—virtuous women will start at this—they look on themselves, like all the poor, as martyrs to society. They think that, as men and things are, they must be; that they

make the virtuous wife, the chaste maiden, possible. In their blind way they are vaguely conscious that the root of this fine flower of western civilisation, the rich monogamous Christian home, is planted in the filth of prostitution, and that to them is owing the "self-restraint," so much admired in gentlemen who do not marry until they can afford to have a family, and so often offered as an example to us working men who love honestly one of our own sort, and do not as a rule go among these girls. And the more thoughtful of them, conscious of their economic uses, resent the opprobrium dealt out to them, and pity themselves angrily as victims rather than criminals, the scapegoats not the polluters of society.

To be sure, they do not fret at the scorn of the great ladies whom they help to keep

virtuous, for they have their compensations. Fine ladies think that because they would not brush skirts with a prostitute, therefore no one will, and that all life shows them the same aspect of repulsion and horror. It is nothing of the kind. Decent women of the poorer class, consort with them, if not cordially yet humanely; then they have friends of their own sort, and many of them; and we know that a multitude of evil doers makes the evil done seem light to each. The gentlemen who go with them are often kind and playful, and no more brutal than most men are to most women outside the artificial restraints of society. Sometimes, of course, they are vile enough; but these are the men who would be brutal to their own lady-wives and daughters. So that the poor Girls, as they call themselves, are not

quite shut out from all human sympathy like the lepers of old — though indeed the circle is terribly narrowed! And though many of them have fits of self-loathing and regret, others take matters more coolly, and look on their profession as a legitimate trade, as lawful as a publican's who sells the gin that robs a man's family of bread, and makes him perhaps a murderer as well as a madman.

Mary Prinsep was what the world calls lost—a bad girl—a castaway—but she might have been a saint for the natural virtue that was in her. I have reason to speak well of her, for to her we owe the life of Joshua.

Soon after we came to know her, Joshua fell ill in our wretched lodgings where we lived and did for ourselves. He did not like to go to the hospital, nor did I like it for

him. We both had a strong feeling against accepting the charity of society; so I said he should not go, and that I would work harder for him and myself too. But by my harder work — overtime, and the like — I was obliged to leave him for twelve hours and more at a stretch; and Mary Prinsep, whose "friend" had just left her to go into a west-end "dress-house," poor wench! came over and nursed him, and kept him alive.

She it was who made up the fire, cooked his broths and messes, gave him his medicine, washed his clothes, and kept him clean and comfortable. And when I came home from work, and found her there, with everything arranged so nicely and as only a woman can—Joshua's bed made and him settled for the night, and my own supper ready, and hot water for cleaning

myself—for we had but one room between us—as one of the great family of the frail, the suffering, I could not feel anything like virtuous horror of her. She was our sister—our sister of sorrow, of poverty, of affliction.

Gladly would Joshua have lifted her out of her life into something purer and nobler. He was so poor himself with all he did and gave away, he had much ado to live on the leavings; and as for marrying, that was as unlikely as murder! So that he could neither put her into any way of business independently, nor give her a home that the world would not misjudge. We did what we could, however. I say *we* intentionally, as it makes the whole thing clear to those who are candid enough not to wilfully misunderstand. We helped her all we could, and she helped us. We worked for her

food, while she gave us her time and did our chores. And so in this way we made it unnecessary for her to continue her sad trade.

This got us the name of associating with bad women; for it was said that we lived partly on her earnings; and made us to be shyly looked on by our shopmates. But Joshua's mind was set to do the thing that is right; and what men said against him, not understanding facts or motives, hurt him no more than that dogs should bark at shadows. That which is, not that which seems, nor what folks choose to say, was what he lived for; and Mary Prinsep was only a text and an occasion, like others.

And even when, one day, the men fairly hooted him down and hustled him into the street, and me along with him, because

when he was chaffed savagely about "his girl" he answered them mildly enough; "Mates, did our great Master receive Mary Magdalene and all sinners, or did He not? And if He did—as you may find for yourselves—am *I* too pure to help them?"—he only said to me, wiping the mud from his torn coat; "You are not afraid, John? You 'll go on the right way, whatever comes of it?"—and not a word even of impatience against those who had misused us, calling us "canters," "white-livered hypocrites," and worse words still. No, I was not afraid, I said. I would stand shoulder to shoulder with him through it all; and where he led, there would I follow, if we sunk up to our very necks in the slough of the world's reproach. And we were not far off.

CHAPTER VI.

Among the rest of the doubtful characters with which our court abounded, was one Joe Traill, who had been in prison many a time for petty larceny and the like, but who, the last time he was had up, was convicted of burglary. However, he was out now on a ticket-of-leave, and fast going the way to get it cancelled, with a new score to the back of it. Respectability and the police were bent on elbowing poor Joe into the mire, which was only too much his natural element. He had been crotch deep in the mud from the earliest; a gutter child, in whose

very blood ran the hereditary taint; a thief, the son of thieves, the grandson of thieves; a thing of mud from head to heel, inside and out; dirty, dissipated, shiftless, and with no more moral principle in him than he had of education. His only morality indeed, was his cleverness in being able to break the law without being found out; and when he was most down on his luck, he was disposed to think most meanly of himself.

He was one of those who stink in the nostrils of cleanly, civilised society, and who are its shame and secret sore. And cleanly, civilised society, not being able to make a good job of him as he stood, thrust him out of its sight, and tried to forget him behind the prison grating. There was no place for Joe in this great world of ours. There was no work for him to do, because he could do

none requiring any of the deftness got by practice; and if by chance he got a job anywhere, he lost it mysteriously in a day or so; and, double as he might, he found the dogs of detection too sharp for him.

So he said to Joshua one night in his blithe way—poor Joe! he had not fibre enough in him to take even his misfortunes seriously!—that there was nothing for him but the old line along with his pals, making a running fight of it, now up now down, as his luck went.

"We 'll see if something better won't turn up," said Joshua. "Burglary's a bad trade, Joe."

"Only one I've got at my fingers' ends, governor," laughed the thief; "and starvation is a worse go than quod."

"Well, till you've learned a better, share

with us," said Joshua. "If we have no widow's cruse——" "Blowed if I know what that means!" put in Joe, "—we have what does as well," continued Joshua; "and it's better for four to go short than for one to be rationed at the hulks."

So now our little home circle was increased by one more; and we had added a burglar to the prostitute.

"It is what Christ would have done," said Joshua, when he was remonstrated with. "He lived among the lepers whom no man would touch, and whose very presence was pollution. But he healed some among them; and so will I these."

But the police did not see it. They do not understand practical Christianity in Scotland-yard, save as a generous kind of fad or pastime in a swell with more money

than brains, and a lot of idle time on his hands. And then they laugh at it behind backs, and ridicule him for being green. But when it came to a poor journeyman carpenter housing a jail-bird, and consorting with bad characters daily, they had but one conclusion to come to—the carpenter was no better than his company. Wherefore, "from information received," Joshua and I, who had long been looked on askance by our mates as I said, were called up before the master, and had our dismissal from the shop. His other men, he said, objected to us; and, by the Lord, from all he had been told he did not wonder at it! And he gave us a caution—kindly meant, if harshly said—not to keep such company as we did, if we wanted to be respected by master or mate and to remember that "birds of a

feather flock together," and if we chose such birds as he was told we did, we could look for nothing else than to be classed along with them. On which he paid us our week's wages, and we found ourselves next thing to penniless in the wilds of London.

But Joshua was undisturbed. He told both Joe and Mary, on the evening we were discharged, that he would not forsake them come what might. It should still be share and share alike; only let them be of good courage and a clean conscience, and things would go well. How, nobody knew; but this is what he said, and promised.

And Mary, looking up into his face with a look that made her like an angel—for indeed she was a pretty girl!—said, "If I have to starve, Joshua, I'll never go back to the streets again!" and poor Joe, first

laughing, and then sobbing like a woman, said, "You'd have done better to have left me to my little game, governor! I've brought you bad luck, you see; and I'm no good, you see, when you've done your best!"

"Don't carry on like that, Joe," said Joshua. "I shall have done something if I save you both: and I will."

I could not help thinking that this "I will," said with such manly courage, such deep religious firmness, was a greater trial of faith than the boyish exaltation in the Rocky Valley so many years ago; and that to save from the streets a girl who was not able to do anything else that the world wants, and to put honesty and a clean name into such a poor conscienceless waif as Joe, were greater deeds than to cause a stone to

move out of its place in the Name of the Lord.

And all of us, his old Cornish friends who had come up to be near him, and some new friends he had made in London, swore we would never desert him, but would stand by him to the last. For we looked that he should do something in his day, as I said before—something to advance the world, and towards the solution of the great questions perplexing society at this moment. True, we were a poor, moneyless lot—all working men, no science among us, no political power, no social status, no political-economy knowledge of the right sort; a handful of enthusiasts set out to realise Christ at one time by faith, and now by works. But we had a soul among us—a leader in whom we believed; and we trusted in ourselves. And

one by one we all got to work again somehow, and floated in the shallow but sufficient water to which we were accustomed. But it was a hard time; and, bit by bit, everything we possessed passed over the pawnbroker's counter, even to our tools. And when they went, it seemed as if all hope had gone.

But when we were at the worst, and things looked as though they had given over all thought of mending—for we were getting whersh and weak for want of food—Joshua received a letter enclosing a five-pound note, "from a friend." We never knew where it came from, and there was no clue by which we could guess. It was very certain that neither had Mary earned it in the old way, nor had Joe stolen it; but who sent it remained for ever a mystery. I always thought

that Mary had had a hand in it, and I think so to this day. I believe, though I don't know, that she borrowed it of an artist to whom she went to sit for a model; for she did not make any secret of this; and that she paid it back honestly when we were in funds again. However that might be, it came at the very nick of time; and immediately after, both Joshua and I got the offer of a job at Messrs. —— in Curtain-road, which we could not have accepted had we not had money wherewith to take our tools out of pawn It was a sharp pinch while it lasted, but, God be praised, it passed without doing real harm to any one. And Joe and Mary still bided with us.

By this time Joshua's strange doings in Church-court had got known to some of the gentlemen who practise philanthropy. His

night-school for those who would learn either prayer or secular knowledge of him—his charity dinners, when he could get enough money together to give them—his goodness to the children, to the lost, to the starving—all this had got wind; and just as he wanted help most, the news of his doings brought him the famous Mr. C. anxious to know how a man like him could carry on charities, apparently on nothing, which cost himself a large income to keep up.

He was a good man, this Mr. C.; up to his lights, none better; but his lights were few and feeble, and he drew a line hard and fast where Joshua did not. His line was respectability. He distinctly refused to aid those who were hopeless paupers, or those of bad repute. He would help respectable poverty, and help it substantially though always

afraid of overdoing it and inducing a habit of reliance on extraneous aid; but beasted, shiftless, drunken poverty—poverty that lied and whined and drank gin and got relief from half-a-dozen charities at once—poverty that was its own cause and that never stirred a hand to help itself—for this he had no pity, and to it gave no help.

"To encourage pauperism" and "to offer a premium for vice" were the two things of which he was most afraid in his dealings with the poor; but he held out a helping hand gladly enough to the "deserving" and the "respectable" poor, and he was a warm patron of reformatories, refuges for soiled doves, and the like half-punitive places of retreat for sinful flesh, where they might repent of their evil past, and be made fit to

take up a lowly place among the respectable members of society once more;—but always, in a sense, a place of humiliation and penitent degradation.

As he came along at this time, and was handy, and as Mary's friend, the artist, had gone to Italy for some months, and she had no other patron of the like kind, so was out of work as one may say, to him Joshua told the whole story of both her and Joe Traill; also how he had kept them in the best way he could from the evil to which society had driven them in former days: he did not add the rider of how society had revenged itself on him as on them, and cast us all out in company. But now, he said, he was desirous of placing them both where their *temptation would be towards honesty;* where it would be better for them to be

honest, and where falling back would plunge them into misery as well as shame.

Mr. C. listened attentively. He was evidently touched by the high spirit of the man, but he greatly questioned the wisdom of his ways. For Joe, he said, he scarcely knew what to propose. He shrank from committing himself to the patronage of a convicted thief, who was not a boy to be sent to a reformatory and disciplined into good ways. It was out of his line altogether, and he had no machinery at hand for him. Had he been a broken-down, sober, honest, and industrious chap, who had failed through sickness or any blameless misfortune, he would then have given him a lift willingly; but a man who had slipped into the dark ways of crime, who had got into houses at dead of night with a crow-

bar and a jemmy—he shook his head, and said he did not like to have anything to do with him. It was offering a premium to vice to take trouble to place this unsatisfactory waif and stray, when hundreds of honest men, who had never gone wrong, were perishing for want of aid.

"As for that," said Joshua, "I ask nothing, whether this man sinned or his parents; or neither. He is in want; and, to my way of thinking, his need is his claim, not his respectability."

Mr. C. looked dubious. "We must draw a line," he said.

"Christ drew it at the Pharisee," answered Joshua simply.

"To make no difference between vice and virtue—to treat the one as tenderly as the other—would soon be to obliterate all

difference between them in minds as well as in practice," said Mr. C.

"And what, then, do we say to the parable of the men who worked unequally, and who got the same wages at the end?" said Joshua.

"My good fellow," cried Mr. C. a little impatiently, "it would be perfectly impossible to try and live strictly after the Bible. 'Counsels of perfection' are all very well, but they are impracticable for the world as it is."

"I have to find that out yet," said Joshua. "Then you will not help me with poor Joe?"

"Do not say I will not—I cannot," said Mr. C. "How can I ask my poor, honest pensioners, or my respectable workmen, to receive a convicted thief among them?"

"'And forgive us our trespasses, as we

forgive them that trespass against us.' Does that mean only petty, personal affronts, sir, or does it mean trespass against our patience, our hope, our faith, our principles? Does it not mean the everlasting Love, whether we call it charity or humanity, by which we would raise the fallen and help the weak?"

"As for that," retorted Mr. C., "there are texts enough against consorting with evil. You cannot touch pitch, Mr. Davidson, without being defiled."

"Christ lodged in the house of Simon the leper. Mary Magdalene loved Him, and He her. I want no other example, sir. What the Master did, His followers and disciples may imitate!"

"You are an enthusiast," said Mr. C. just as the M.P. had said before him, and

both meant that enthusiasm was ridiculous; "and some day these fine theories of yours will come to a cruel downfall. You will be harbouring some ruffian who will turn against you, and perhaps cut your throat for your pains. I tell you I know these people —they are incorrigible."

"Then what would you do with them, Mr. C.?"

"You can do nothing with them!" he answered.

"But they cannot be let to starve," said Joshua earnestly.

"I do not see that it is any one's duty to feed them, when they will not feed themselves save by vice and crime," answered the philanthropist. "I would make all rogues, male and female, show some tangible signs of repentance and good living

before I would help them or countenance them in any way. Believe me, your universal charity is the most disastrous line you could adopt."

"Then Christ was wrong," said Joshua: "and so we have come round to our starting-point again. So this is decided—you will not give Joe Traill a trial?"

"No; I would rather not have anything to do with him," said Mr. C., who had talked himself cross and determined. "I should never be easy with the fellow. I have no fancy for burglars, and I don't believe in their reformation. All my men are picked men; not a loose character among them. I could not ask them to admit a convicted thief as one of them; and if I did, my own influence over them would be gone. It is because they know I

would never pardon the smallest dereliction of duty that I keep them up to the mark: with what face then could I place among them such an unsatisfactory companion as your *protégé?* The thing would be impossible! With the woman perhaps I can do something. If she is young, she cannot be wholly hardened, and I could get her into the —— Street Reformatory."

"No," said Joshua, "I will not consent to her going into a reformatory. It is not that she needs. In a reformatory she will be continually reminded of what I want her to forget. She would be made morbid by incessant thought about herself; taught to say penitential psalms when she should be set to learn some skilled employment that would be of use to her in the future. I wish her to be kept virtuous through self-respect,

and by being placed beyond the need of going back to such a life. I do not want her to be weakened by a self-torturing contrition for the past, or terrified at the prospect of eternal damnation for the future. I want her to be lifted up, not cast down."

"You surely do not make light of repentance!" cried Mr. C. warmly. "What other assurance have we that she will not fail again?"

"The best assurance, sir, will be to teach her self-respect and the means of gaining an honest living," said Joshua.

"You are a rank materialist, Davidson!" said Mr. C. "I cannot stand your referring sin to mere social conditions. Are there no such things as sins in high places? Poverty and ignorance are not the only roots of human wickedness!"

"About the strongest though," Joshua answered.

"And the sins of luxury——"

"Make Mary Prinsep and her class," interrupted Joshua. "See here, sir, what are you asked to do?—to repair, in a very small way, the evil done by society. You represent society at this moment, and you are asked to undo a portion of your own bad work."

"Pshaw!" said Mr. C. "*I* have not made Mary bad!"

He was an individual kind of man, and never saw beyond his own point.

"Well," he then said, "I will do what I can for the young woman. My wife wants an under-servant; I will put the case to her; but I rely on you," he added, old habits of thought coming back to steady

him in this sudden taking-off of his feet, as it were; "I rely on you that I am dealing with a woman substantially repentant, and so far purified; and that she will not corrupt the rest. For it is a dangerous experiment at the best."

"She is good enough for any one to trust and to love," said Joshua warmly; and Mr. C. looked at him with a sharp, suspicious glance that quite changed his face. "And I thank you heartily," Joshua went on to say, unconscious that he had caused the slightest discomfort in the gentleman's mind; "you have done a good work to-day — a work of brotherhood with Christ."

"I trust I am not doing wrong," said Mr. C. doubtfully; "but it is against my principles, you know. I cannot help feeling

that I am rewarding a woman, because she has lived a life of infamy, with a position which hundreds of virtuous girls would be rejoiced to fill."

"If your economic conscience troubles you, sir, lay it at rest by the answer our Lord made to Himself, when He asked the Canaanitish woman if it were meet to cast the children's bread to dogs."

"For all that, I cannot think it a duty to reward vice," persisted Mr. C. "And in doing what I am doing now, I wish it to be distinctly understood that it is at your instance."

"Which means that you refuse the responsibility?"

"It does."

"So be it, sir. I accept it."

"That will not help me much if the thing

turns out ill," said Mr. C. in a discomposed voice.

"Oh, sir, have faith in human nature!" said Joshua earnestly—so earnestly that I believe the tears were in his eyes: they were in his voice.

"It is because I know human nature that I have so little faith in it," said Mr. C. "Every one wants the help of strict moral principle to enable him to steer clear of the temptations so sure to beset him, and these fallen brothers and sisters are but leaky vessels at the best. If human nature was the grand thing you say it is, Mr. Davidson, of what need the coming of Christ? You are a Christian."

"And it is because Christ lived that I believe in humanity," said Joshua.

On which, Mr. C. saying with a smile,

"There is no doing anything with you, Mr Davidson; you are as unconvinceable as a woman," shook hands with him kindly enough, and left.

A day or two after this he came again, with many kind words, much regret and I doubt not genuine, but—his wife was as afraid of our poor Mary as he had been of Joe Traill, and refused to take her into her house. If the other servants should ever know; if Mary had imposed on Joshua, and was really of no good; if she should corrupt the younger ones; and then the repute of their house—the duty they owed their neighbours to keep up a stainless appearance. No, there could be no home for her there; but the lady sent a note, full of that half-censorious advice a virtuous woman knows so well how to administer to her fallen

sisters — a parcel of tracts (Mary could not read), and a renewal of her husband's offer to get her in the —— Street Reformatory. After which perhaps some kind Christian person would be found to take her, she said, endorsed as she would then be by the Lady Superintendent of the establishment. For without casting any slur on Mr. Davidson, she went on to say, the voucher of only a young man was not quite satisfactory to a mistress who cared for the honour of her house. And perhaps she was right. But then Joshua was not like other young men; only she did not know this; and Christians think it no sin to suspect all manner of evil of each other, unless they know for certain it does not exist.

Well, it was a disappointment; but

Joshua was not a man to be cast down for one blow or a dozen; so he set to work to find some one who would take her, knowing her past life; and at last lighted on a good, tender-hearted, but timid woman, who received her in full faith so far as the girl herself was concerned, but on the express condition that no one should ever know what she had been, and that there was to be no kind of communication between her and ourselves, or any of her old Church-court friends. To these terms Joshua advised her to submit; so with many tears poor Mary went away to take the place of kitchen-maid in a family living at a little distance from London, where, as the lady said, she had a chance now of redeeming herself, and a new start given her altogether.

"And if I do well, Joshua, you will be

pleased with me?" she said as she was bidding us good-by.

"More than pleased, Mary," he said. "You know that I trust you, and that we both love you—John here as well as I."

Mary's face was as white as the frill round her neck. "Joshua!" she said, looking up at him, "give me one kiss before I go; it will help me."

Joshua bent his noble head and kissed her tenderly.

"God be with you, sister!" he said, and his voice a little failed him.

"And I will say the prayer you taught me, Joshua, regularly morning and evening when I ain't too sleepy," said Mary simply. "And you will pray for me too?"

"As I do ever, my girl," said Joshua: "and I believe that God hears us!"

"Then He will hear me!" said Mary with a kindling face; "and I'll pray harder nor ever for the thing I want!"

Poor Mary! prayer was naught but a "charm" to her as yet. She had never heard one, never offered one, till Joshua taught her the Lord's Prayer, with a childish hymn and a childish "God bless all I love" at the end; and she repeated what she had been taught as a young child might; believing that it did good because she had been told so by one she loved and trusted, but realising nothing more. Or if she realised anything, it was that she prayed to Joshua, grown very great and strong, and a long way off.

CHAPTER VII.

JOSHUA'S life of work and endeavour brought with it no reward of praise or popularity. It suffered the fate of all unsectarianism, and made him to be as one man in the midst of foes. Had he been a converted sinner like Ned Wright, preaching the doctrine of the Atonement, and Purification by the blood of Jesus, he would have had all the evangelical force at his back, pivoted as they are on the same hub, whatever their special denomination. Had he been a Ritualist, working under organised authority, he would have then been a pipe, so

to speak, through which flowed the power of the Church; and this much more had he been a Roman Catholic, and of any Order. Had he been a Unitarian, a stickler for respectability and that the poor he relieved should be deserving, like Mr. C. and the charity-organisation people; or a Political Economist, giving lectures on the law of supply and demand, and the immorality of large families; had he belonged to any body whatsoever, he would have been supported. But, as he was—a man working on the Christ plan, and that alone; dealing with Humanity by pity and love and tolerance—he was as a stranger and an alien.

The whole force of home missionaries of every denomination discountenanced him as an infidel, unsound, irregular; and in whatsoever they disagreed among themselves,

they all agreed in their ill estimate of him. The police were suspicious of him, and set him down as a doubtful character who harboured criminals; and the very people to whom he gave himself—accustomed as they were to be scouted by every man and woman pretending to clean hands and a pure life, or, at the best, to be preached at and urged to remorse—misdoubted him. The absence of abhorrence in his dealings with them looked to some like a trap, to others like encouragement. And yet they could scarcely think that!—with all his endeavours to put them into a better way of life, and to lift them out of the necessity of crime by giving them the alternative of honesty made possible, because giving them work sufficient for their daily wants.

But he soon began to see that the utmost

he, or a dozen such as he, could do, was only palliative and temporary. He might save one out of a thousand, and he would do well if he did that; but what is one out of a thousand cleansed and set in a safe place, to the nine hundred and ninety-nine left in their filth at the bottom of the abyss? Things have gone too far in England now for private charities to be of much use. What is wanted is a thorough reorganisation of society, so that the distribution of wealth and knowledge shall not be so partial as it is. And this the working classes must get for themselves by combination.

So Joshua turned to class-organisation as something more hopeful than private charity. But do not let me be misunderstood: he gave up nothing of his own personal doings among the poor, and never wearied nor re-

laxed. If he looked to organisation as the framework, he did not disdain charity as the enrichment, in the plan of social amelioration.

When the International Working Men's Association was formed, he joined it as one of its first members; indeed he mainly helped to establish it. It had been one of his articles of belief long before any one else had spoken, that the time had passed for distinct and exclusive nationalities; and that if working men would free themselves from the fetters in which capital and caste have bound them, it must be by their own class-fraternisation all over the world. If labour is to make its own terms with capital, it must be by the coercive strength of the labourer. To wait for the free gift of the capitalist, through his recognition of human

duties, as some among the Comtists urge, would be to wait for the millennium. Yet the International represented no class enmity with him. He had no dream of barricades and high places taken by assault. It was to him, as to his other English brethren, an organisation to strengthen the hands of the labourer everywhere, but not to plunge society into a bloody war. It was a means of class-advancement by peaceable and noble efforts, not of universal destruction by violent or ignoble ones.

The middle classes laugh at the artisan's desire to rise in the world, and speak of his close combinations as traitorous and rebellious to the existing order of things. Some think it an irreligious contempt of a caste-Providence; forgetting that their own order was made by the same spirit of de-

termination, and that the recognition of the merchant class, and its reception on anything like terms of equality, was forced from the nobles by men who had at heart the great truth of human equality and human rights; at least, down to that part of the social page where their own names stood. Below that paragraph where the artisan, the *prolétaire,* is to be found, society has as yet drawn a line not to be overpassed. Demand rights and recognition for working men, and even the Liberal press gives forth an uncertain sound, and the bugbear of "Jack Cade" scares such stout hearts as the *Pall Mall* and the *Spectator.* Even they, kings of liberal thought as they are in so many ways, will not see that the modern artisan stands in the same relation to capital as that in which the ancient serf stood to

the land. The serf tilled the land, which was his master's, for his master. If he could get for himself a living about as good as that of the hogs he forested, he had all that was considered necessary for a serf. And the artisan represents the serf of olden days, while capital is the foretime baron. The baron gave his villein disdainful leave to live because his life was so far requisite to his own needs; but individually he had neither rights nor value. So the capitalist. He gives his workmen only enough to keep them in efficient working order—or not that, if the labour market is so thronged that he can replace without trouble those who fall out. His "hands" are the mere parts of his machinery. The sum of them work to a certain result; but he is indifferent whether the work is done with sorrow and insuffi-

ciency to the individual or not. His sole business is to see that the sum get through their labours creditably—to the firm. It is good that the work of the world should be done at all costs, even by compulsory labour if need be; but it is better that it should be done by men regarded as men, individual, and having inalienable rights, rather than as so many portions of a vitalised mechanism. And a fair and proportionate share in the profits of the business is part of the rights of the labourer.

I am speaking now as if of myself; but I am only repeating what I have heard my friend say scores of times.

Of course Joshua was an earnest Republican. Who that thinks for himself can fail to be one? Not that he would have put aside the reigning sovereign by force,

but he held that the times were ripening for the old monarchical symbol and aristocratic exclusiveness to disappear now that the reality had gone; and that the Republic would come about of itself, thanks, in great part, to the monarch who has shown the people that royalty can be dispensed with and yet things go none the worse for the withdrawal, and to the aristocracy which has abandoned its old traditions of blood and birth, and has sold so many of its blue ribands to money. But he was not a Republican of the kind to rave and vilify, and accuse all the higher classes of wilful misdoing, of vice and selfishness, and what not. He never abused anybody, but judged things by their merits, and gave to the professors of any doctrine, no matter what, at least the credit of sincerity. By which he made

many enemies, and was constantly accused of lukewarmness to the cause, and of looking two ways at once.

"You cannot beat me off my point," he used to say, when he had put into an uproar a little inner and anonymous society which some few of us had formed together, by vindicating some man whose measures he also had attacked. "I say that we do our cause harm, and degrade ourselves, by all these childish personalities. What we have to do is, to defend our own principles, and show the fallacy or the evil of our opponents'; but we must fight fair, and give that credit for honesty of purpose which we demand for ourselves. If we are thieves and brigands to the governing classes, and they are thieves and brigands to us, what kind of understanding can we ever come to together?"

But L., one of those fanatical men who cannot accept the doctrine of an opponent's virtue, and whose zeal takes the form of the wildest abuse on all who differ from him, got up and denounced Joshua as an "inherent traitor," and advised his expulsion from the society. And more than one of the council looked grave, and as if they were giving their minds to it, had not Félix Pyat risen, and given his opinion so forcibly that the malcontents were silenced. Even the thin-voiced little man who had denounced Joshua, and whose ambition was to be regarded as the Robespierre of the society—incorruptible, and not to be moved by fear or favour—even he had to give in. For Félix was our giant; and Félix loved Joshua.

This was at the time when he was over

here as an exile, chiefly reading at the British Museum, and when he gained the love and admiration of all who knew him by the dignity, the devotion, the earnestness of his life. I mention this somewhat by the way, as my feeble protest against the terms in which it is the fashion to speak of one of the finest fellows that ever lived—as fine in his own way as Delescluze, our martyr, —and by those who ought to know better; and who do know better; but who think it politic to swim with the stream, and to curse those whom fortune has not blessed.

From his position in the International, and in other political societies—which abound among the working men more than the careless upper ten have the least idea of—Joshua was thrown into intimate relations with a great many men, more or less no

torious. He saw all sorts—the frothy ranter whose motive power was vanity; the reckless agitator whose conscience was obscured, and, so long as there was something stirring, cared nothing what stirred or who suffered; the bilious antagonist to all men superior to himself, and who would pull down those above to his own level but never raise up to it those who lay below; the honest patriot willing to sink all minor differences in the one great aim, and ready to sacrifice himself for the good of his cause and class, but blind as a beetle as to the best methods: he saw them all, and he accepted all with that broad human love, that large and liberal allowance of differences, which made the charm of his character.

"They are good elements," he used to say, "badly mixed. Does not some one say

that dirt is only matter in the wrong place? So these men as leaders would be pernicious enough, but a wise administration could utilise them. When Fourier could find an economic value in the *diablotin*, we need not fear for any one."

It was on this point that Joshua and the chief man of the London branch split. He was a purist, and gave his mind to tares. But Joshua thought more of the wheat, and believed in the larger power of good than of evil. He opposed all that narrow partisanship which goes only in one groove, and said, as the skilled workmen have lately said, that he would work with any one, no matter what his rank or politics, who would aid him and his order in securing the essentials for knowledge and decency of living. The more rabid and ultra of the politicians

attacked him, as he had been attacked in the other society; but he held on in his own broad, generous way. And though he never got the ear of the International, because he was so truly liberal, he had some little influence; and what influence he had ennobled their councils as they have never been ennobled since.

This is not speaking against the society. I belong to it myself, and I am proud to do so. But I have learnt from my friend to distrust one-sided partisans, and to think all questions best argued from their principles, and the men who either support or oppose them left out in the shade. Men don't wilfully uphold the thing they know to be bad. Take the stiffest Conservative of them all—the man who believes in the divine ordination of caste, and the absolute need

of preserving the fetichism of society as it is, even though, like Juggernaut, the great car of gentility crushes the whole working class beneath it — he may be, and is, sorry for the individuals; but he maintains the existing order conscientiously. And to blackguard him, and call him blood-sucker, and all the names that hysterical men do call him, is simply childish anger, not manly argument. So, on the other side, the men who would make a revolution by fire and blood, as has been said, if necessary, though they too would be sorry for the individuals who had to suffer, yet they would feel the thing to be done so much more righteous than the suffering would be unrighteous, that they would sacrifice the few and the present to the good of the many and the future. And

these are no more "bloodthirsty scoundrels," and all the rest of it, than their opponents After all, it is the same battle of strength which goes on throughout creation—the struggle for existence in class as in individuals; and "the good old rule, the royal plan" has its meaning and its uses, in that it necessitates endeavour; which is the sole way by which things human come to perfection.

CHAPTER VIII.

We were sitting one evening at the night school which Joshua still kept up, the room full of men and women of what the world calls the worst kind, when the door was flung open with a clatter, and Joe Traill, shabbier and dirtier than ever, staggered in half-drunk. I do not know if I have said that Joshua had at last succeeded in getting him a situation, where he would have done well enough had he kept off drink; but he had not; and this was the upshot after about three months' fair sailing.

"It's no use, governor," he said to Joshua,

in his drunken way; "work and no lush too hard for me, governor! I'd got to fall soft!"

"Well Joe, my man, it seems that you have fallen soft enough this time; as soft as mud!" said Joshua. "However, sit down and make no noise. I will talk to you by-and-by."

"Not a copper!" said Joe, turning his pockets inside out and holding on by the tips. "I've come back like the devil, worse than I went!"

"All right, friend, but not just now; let me go on with what I have in hand, and then I'll attend to you."

But Joe was in that state when a man is either maudlin or quarrelsome. He was the latter; and partly because he had still sense enough to be ashamed of himself, and partly

because he was pricking all over like a porcupine with the drink, and wanted to have it out with some one, he chose to try and fasten a quarrel on Joshua. So he set at him again; this time with some ribaldry I'll not lower myself to repeat. And again Joshua answered him mildly, but more authoritatively than before.

"Sit down," he said; and I don't think I ever heard his voice sound so hard and stern. "You've made a sore enough job of it for one day; don't add to your disgrace by folly."

Then the bad blood, the bad convict blood that never got quite clear away, boiled up in Joe, and he let out from his shoulder and struck Joshua on his head, at the side just above the ear. A dozen men rose at once; a dozen voices cursed and swore, some at

Joe for the blow, some yahing at Joshua for not returning it; women shrieked; the forms were upset as the men scrambled forward; and the quiet night-school was turned into a roaring Babel of tumult and violence. One brawny fellow—he too was a burglar, a man who might at any time develop into a murderer; but he had more fibre in him than poor, loose, slippery Joe, more to go upon as it were, and so could be held in hand better if once you could master his brutality—he squared up to the drunken creature, on whom already half-a-dozen hands were fiercely laid. But Joshua, who had turned white and sick-looking with the blow, laid his left hand on Jim's big arm, while he held out his right to Joe Traill, saying; "Why Joe! strike at a man, and your friend, for nothing! You must be

dreaming, my son, and a bad dream too! Give us your hand, and wake up out of it!"

I can tell nothing more. There was nothing perhaps in the words, but there was that in the look of him, as he stood there so white and yet so kingly, with one hand keeping back Jim Graves, the other offered to Joe squirming in the grasp of those who held him, that acted like a spell on all the room. There were men there, and women too, who would have been ready to tear him in pieces themselves if they had suspected for an instant that his loving leniency was from cowardice; but it was no coward who confronted the drunkard that had struck him, who confronted that roaring, yelling crowd of desperate men and women, and calmed them all by his own unutterable dignity. The same intense look that had come into

his face when, a little lad, he had questioned the parson in the church, when, a youth, he had prayed for a miracle in the Rocky Valley, came into his face now. He was as if raised into something more than man—so simple, so earnest as he was—so far above all common weaknesses, so near to God, so like to Christ!

Joe burst into tears, sobered and subdued; many of the women cried too, even that big coarse-mouthed Betsy Lyon, one of the most abandoned women of the district; while the men slunk together as it were, and most of them said a few rough words of praise, which, well meant as they were, sounded very far amiss at such a time. And then the police, attracted by the tumult, came up into the room; and, glad of an opportunity they had been looking for—after having been

knocked about a good deal, for all that Joshua and I did our best to protect them—marched us both off to the station-house where we were locked up for the night, no bail being at hand.

The magistrate understood nothing of Joshua's defence next day, when he made it, but put him down with a severe rebuke. And as we had to be punished, reason or none, we were both sent to prison for a couple of weeks, as a caution to us to behave ourselves better in the future. To live according to Christ in modern Christendom was, as we found out, to be next thing to criminal, and at all events qualified for prison discipline. We don't understand anything about the Lazaruses and Simeons and Magdalenes of our own city. When we read of our Lord and Master going about among the bad

people of His day, we say it was divine; when Joshua followed suit, he was locked up. Well, Christ was the criminal of His day; and Caiaphas the high priest, representing respectability and adhesion to the existing order of things, took Him in hand, and taught the multitude so well to feel how far He had erred against the morality of the day, that they asked for Barabbas rather than for him. And we have our Caiaphases in full vigour still.

We had not done with poor Joe. Mr. C.'s words came too true. The demon of drink had got possession of him, and he was no more his own master than if he had been a lunatic in Bedlam. During our fortnight's imprisonment he took everything he could lay his hands on—clothes, furniture, tools—every individual thing, he did!—and pawned

them for drink; and when we were set at liberty, we found our place stripped.

I never had Joshua's patience, and I confess I was indignant. It did seem to me such wicked ingratitude, such lowness!

But when I flared up with sudden passion, and broke out against the thief for a rascal and a scoundrel, Joshua silenced me with a rebuke it was not in me to resist.

"Unto seventy times seven, John?" he said, "I think we joined hands on that line?" Then he added: "We must look that poor fellow up. He has got on to the incline, and, if not stopped, he will go down to perdition."

He took his hat and went out; and after many hours' search through all the worst haunts he knew of, brought Joe Traill back: and kept him.

I need not go over the whole after-history

of this wretched castaway. It is enough to say that again and again he fell into bad courses, and again and again Joshua forgave him. No trial was too severe for his Christian forbearance, his angelic patience. "Not to the sinless, but to the sinners," he used to say; and truly the sinners found it so!

This unwearied sweetness, this tenderness and hope that never failed, wrought their good work before too late; and the convicted thief, who but for Joshua would have ended his days at the hulks, if not at the gallows, died,—of the results of former poverty and vice, granted—so far at peace with the law as to die out of jail, and repeating softly, "God bless me and forgive me!"

These backslidings and failures were among the greatest difficulties of Joshua's work. Men and women, whom he had

thought he had cleansed and set on a wholesome way of living, turned back again to the drink and the devilry of their lives. Excitement had become all in all to them; the monotony of virtue tired them, and they broke out into evil as a relief. But, fail as often and as badly as they might, they never chilled Joshua's heart, if they saddened him; as indeed they did. He forgave them everything; whether their sins had been against himself or against the law; and took them up where they had left him. Sometimes they laughed at him for his patience with them: sometimes they swore at him and refused his friendship; sometimes they cried and clung about him with pathetic but short-lived gratitude; and sometimes, but not often, they took his better lessons to heart and reformed altogether. For the most part,

they just fluctuated—now bad, now good, as the fit took them and temptation was stronger than resolution. But, bad or good, he was ever the same to them—in the first case trying to win over, in the second helping to keep straight, and thankful if he succeeded ever so little in his endeavours.

The different reasons given by the various sectarians who came along, when any of his failures were afloat, were what I have said before. The Evangelicals said it was because he did not teach the Gospel; the Church people, because he was unconsecrated to the task; the Unitarians asked him, in calm disdain, how he could expect to do good, if he made no difference between vice and virtue but treated both alike? while the Charity Organization people talked of prosecuting him for his encouragement of men-

dicity, and spoke of him as the pest of the district and the cause of half the pauperism about, because he helped the poor in their need without enquiring into the merits of the case. And they all agreed that the weak spot in his system, and the cause of his failures, was just this—he was not a Christian.

In the midst of all Mary Prinsep came back on our hands. You may perhaps remember that her mistress had made a point of concealing her former life from every one; in which she was justified, and for Mary's sake as much as for her own. Things had gone very well so far, and Mary had given satisfaction and worked hard to deserve it, when unfortunately that man who had known her only too well in the sorrowful days of her sin, came with his family to the house, on a visit of a day or two. All the

servants were marshalled into prayers morning and evening; and naturally Mary with them; face to face with the guests. So there it was—on the one side a dignified, handsome, well-to-do gentleman, with respectable white hair and a gold eye-glass, a wife and a fine young family, a character to lose, and a reputation for piety; on the other, a poor ignorant girl, abandoned by society, driven by want into bad ways, but now doing her best to get out of them.

It was an awkward meeting for him, and he was afraid maybe of Mary's establishing a claim, or telling what she knew. There he was, a guest in her master's house, with his wife and eldest daughter, and under his own name which she had never known, and his private and official addresses both to be got at. It was an instinct of self-preserva-

tion, no doubt; but it was cowardly all the same; and, as usual, the weak one had to go to the wall. He made up an excellent story to explain how it was that he knew the girl's former life. It was a story to his credit as a Christian gentleman somehow, and he told it out of sheer regard for his good friends who had been so shamefully imposed on. And even when the lady confessed, as she did, that she had known the main fact of Mary's history, she was urged so strongly to get rid of her that she consented, partly in a vague kind of belief that she had been imposed on and that Mary was worse than she appeared and capable of all manner of unknown crimes, partly by the force of respectability and the need of keeping up blameless appearances. So, as the right thing to do considering her position and

what she owed her family and her own character, this lady—good Christian as she was, going to church regularly twice on Sunday, and taking the sacrament once a month—turned the poor creature out of doors again; and she, keeping the gentleman's secret loyally, came back to us, as the only friends she had.

She was something different to us from any other girl that Joshua had been the means of rescuing, and we both felt that she had a stronger claim somehow, on our exertions and affections. Other women came and went, and Joshua helped them and got them work, and did what he could for them, and always kept up a kindly interest in them, and the like of that; but they were not to us what Mary was; for she was like our own sister. So, when she came back, it was just a family sorrow somehow;

but, to me at least, it was a bit of a joy too. But you see since we had got into that trouble about Joe, and had been locked up, we had been worse off than ever. Masters would not employ us; mates would not work with us—we were "jail birds" to them; and the Union turned us out. Joshua held on though, and we got day-jobs; but we were often hungry and often weary; yet Joshua never let me sink into despair, nor was he ever near it himself, and we managed to scrape along somehow. Still, our present poverty made poor Mary's return embarrassing, though she didn't see it all.

"It is of no use, Joshua," she said, sitting on a chair and leaning her head on her hand disconsolately: "once lost, you are done for in this world! There is nothing for me but the old way; it is all I have left!"

I remember so well when she said this. The sun had come round to our window; for it was a summer's evening; and it came into the room and fell on her, as she sat with her bonnet off, and her fair hair partly fallen about her face. She had very fine hair, and she knew it. I remember too that her dress was some kind of blue, and that she looked like a picture there is in the National Gallery; and I thought, if only some one who could save her really, and lift her up for ever out of the past, could but see her now!

"Courage, Mary, and patience," said Joshua.

"Yes, I know all that; but the ways and means?" said Mary, raising her eyes to him. "What can I do, Joshua? To get my bread any way but the old way I must creep into a house under false pretences, and then be

always afraid of being found out; and if I am found out I am sure to be turned off. No one will have me who knows about me, if I work ever so hard, or try to do my duty ever so faithfully."

"One failure is not final," said Joshua. "While we have a home, you have one too; you are our sister, remember. Only have faith, and as I said before courage and patience; and beware of the first step back!"

"Ah, Joshua!" said Mary, "you are an angel!"

"No," he answered smiling, "I am only a man trying to live by principle."

But if he was not an angel he was not far off being one.

It was difficult to know what to do for the best for Mary. We kept her for as long as we could, she doing our chores for

us in the old way for her meat and room; and then Joshua raised funds—I can scarce understand how, but the poorest of the people helped, as well as the best off—and somehow, enough was got together to establish her in a small sweet-stuff shop in East-street close to Church-court. To help her with the rent we went to lodge with her; which suited both her and ourselves; for you see we had got accustomed to her, and she to us, and she knew our ways, and was always good and helpful. People talked, of course; but then people talk about anything, reason or none, that is out of the common by ever so small a line; and no man who has taken an independent path can escape the comment of the crowd accustomed to only one way. The old report that we were living with a woman of bad

character crept about again, and got down to our dear Cornish homes. You may be sure it made our mothers bad enough when they heard it; but I don't think they quite believed it, though they thought it right to send us a warning, as if they did; and if they did, then they believed what was not true. As for ourselves, we had our own consciences and Mary's salvation to keep us up; and with these it mattered little what any one else chose to say. As Joshua said, we had not set out in our endeavour to realise Christ for the sake of gain, but for the sake of the right; and if we had to suffer, we must; but the right was not to be abandoned because of it.

CHAPTER IX.

Lord X., (I may not in common honour give his name; a man however—so far I may say—notorious for his philanthropy of an unsteady and spasmodic kind, and for a certain restless curiosity to see into the inside of different social circles)—this lord, in his wanderings among the East-end poor, had come across Joshua in his little kingdom of endeavour in Church-court. And as no one could come in contact with him, without feeling that inexplicable charm which is inseparable from great earnestness and self-devotion, it is to be supposed that Lord X.

among the rest was attracted to the man as he was. Or maybe it was only a poor kind of curiosity, not sympathy; as I have since believed. However that may be, he and Joshua met; and a friendship was struck up between them on the spot. I use the word advisedly; for though the one was a peer of the realm, and the other only an artisan—not learned in the scholarly way of a gentleman; not refined in the same way perhaps as a gentleman, so far as manner and little observances went; a man speaking with a provincial accent, and dressed in fustian and coarse clothes—yet he was fit to take his place with the finest gentleman in the land; and even the finest lady would have found but little in him to ridicule and much to respect. And I will do both Lord and Lady X. the credit of sincerity in

the beginning, when, as I said, the friendship between him and them was struck up.

Then it must be remembered, that Joshua was one of the handsomest men you could see in a long summer's day ; a real man ; no sickly, effeminate, half-woman, but a tall, broad-shouldered, deep-chested fellow, largely framed, and with that calm self-control, that steady unfeverish energy, which seemed as if it could carry the world before it. And maybe his good looks influenced his new acquaintances in the beginning, even more than they themselves knew. However that might be, they made up to him, and seemed as though they would have been his best friends all through.

"You want a background, Mr. Davidson," said Lord X., one day when he called on him at our lodgings. "All human nature

resolves itself into a mathematical formula; *a* plus *y* represents a quantity unattainable by *a* alone."

"But what background can I get, my lord?" returned Joshua. "It sounds a strange confession to make, but no one will work with me. Sects keep only to themselves or their affiliations; and I, who belong to no sect, am looked on as an enemy by all because I am an enemy to none."

"Putting sectarianism aside for the moment, you can do nothing without the sanction of society," said Lord X. "No movement can succeed which is not backed by men of birth and money."

Joshua smiled. "This remark does not apply to the roots, my lord, I suppose?" he said; "only to the growth and development?"

"Oh!" said Lord X., carelessly, "a low fellow might strike out an idea, but it would want a man of position to develop it."

"Well, perhaps you are right," Joshua answered. "For, after all, Christianity owes more to Paul than to Jesus; and the Pauline development has struck deeper and spread wider than the Christ original."

"Just so," said Lord X.

"The one being example, both difficult to follow and subversive of the existing state of things; the other dogma which ranks the intellectual acceptance of a creed above the revolutionary ethics on which it is based," said Joshua.

"But, Mr. Davidson!" remonstrated Lord X., "surely even you, enthusiast as you are, must acknowledge that it would be impossible to go back to the practices of

early Christian times? The staff and the scrip were all very well in their day, but they would scarcely do now. Society has become more complex and intricate since then; it would be out of all question to have the common purse and live in the barbaric simplicity of apostolic times. Times change, and manners with them."

"Which is just my difficulty, my lord," said Joshua. "For if modern society is right, then Christ was wrong; and we have to look elsewhere than to Him for a solution of our moral and social problems."

"I would not pronounce so crudely as that," said Lord X. "Say rather that a further development may reconcile our differences."

"So be it, sir; yet if this is so, we are still in the same position as before, and the

life of Christ, as related in the Bible, is not the absolute example for us to follow."

"About that you must form your own opinion," said Lord X., with a certain cynical indifference not pleasant to witness. "What you may or may not believe of the Bible is a question for yourself alone to decide: it can have no interest for any one else. What has an interest, however, is your mode of dealing with the great social problems in which you have bestirred yourself; and, going back to our starting-point, I say again that you can do nothing if society does not assist you."

Joshua smiled a little sadly. "And I have only the same answer to make, my lord," he said. "No one will help me; and my work, such as it is, stands alone."

"Then I think, Mr. Davidson, that it

must be your own fault," said Lord X. "There are liberal denominations to which your spirit of inquiry would not be alien; why cannot you coalesce with them? The Broad Church do not nail their colours to your old enemy, dogma; and the Unitarians are not superstitious."

"But the Unitarians above all demand respectability of life," said Joshua. "Having abandoned that wide harbour, the Atonement, they are obliged to anchor themselves on morality. My poor lost sheep would come off but badly before the rigid tribunal of Unitarian morality; and the Broad Church, though more humane perhaps, requires at the least repentance. But the men and women I have to do with are without a sense of sin—people who fail again and again, and whom nothing but the utmost

patience can ever reclaim, if even that does."

"Then I do not see much use in your attempts," said Lord X. "I myself would do all I could to rescue the poor wretches one sees in the courts and alleys from the filth and misery in which they live. But when I find I am doing no real good, and that they go wrong again, I leave them to their fate and mark them off as hopeless. You must draw a line, Mr. Davidson! For the sake of society, you must show some difference in your estimate of men. To treat the deserving and the undeserving alike is gross injustice. Some of these wretches are more like brutes than men. I would clear them all out like rats; and with no more compunction than if they were rats."

"I do not agree with you, my lord. I

believe that more harm has been done by condemnation than ever would come through tolerance. By love alone can the world be saved."

"Love? Rubbish!" said Lord X. "The laws must be obeyed, and society supported."

"Only in so far as it is just," put in Joshua.

"If by just you mean equality, pardon me if I say that you talk nonsense," said Lord X. "You might as well say that nature is unjust, because a grove of oaks needs more space than a row of turnips, as that man is to blame because he has lifted himself into classes of which the superiors have more than the inferiors. If it had not been for this injustice, as you call it, we should never have had a superior class at all, and the world would have gone on

for ever in one dead level of mediocrity, where no one shone, and no one was obscured."

"Granted," said Joshua. "But you having developed into stars and suns, what we want is, that you should help the poor dark spheres on the same way."

Lord X. laughed. "I doubt the power and I question the wisdom of that," he said. "Help them to be cleanly and virtuous and content with their natural position, if you like; but I for one do not go further."

"And Christ and history do, my lord," said Joshua.

"Mr. Davidson, you are incorrigible!" said Lord X., jocularly; "but happily your opinions do not vitiate your good works, and I will help you in these where I can."

"Thank you, my lord," said Joshua simply: "I shall hold you to your promise. And yet you must understand that I hope far more from the union and organization of the working classes together, than from any extraneous aid whatever; only we take all kinds."

"In which you are wise," said Lord X., drily. "You would get on but poorly among yourselves I fancy, if it were not for Us."

Joshua did not answer. He said afterwards that, having made his declaration honestly, he felt it would have been ungenerous to have carried the conversation further on that line. While accepting my lord's help it was scarcely the thing to depreciate it; so the talk then drifted or rather settled on all that he had been doing in Church-court and the neighbourhood—on his

night-school, his charities, his hospitality to thieves and the like; and the results; those whom he might fairly count as his successes, with those who had been as yet his failures. He never allowed more than this "as yet." "While there is a gate open to them, there is always the hope that they will enter in by it," he used to say. "What men are taught of Christ in heaven—that no shame, no disgrace, no sin can make Him turn away His face from those who seek Him—so ought they to find here on earth in human pity and human love. If we were more patient, we should have more power over each other, and there would be fewer failures."

"You mean, if we were gods we should act in a godlike manner," said Lord X., with that curious mixture of cynicism and philanthropy,

kindness and satire, earnestness and levity, that characterised him.

"No," Joshua answered; "I mean only that, if we did our best possible as men, we should make a better job of life altogether both for ourselves individually and for the world at large."

"You must come and see me, Mr. Davidson," said Lord X., suddenly rising and drawing on his gloves. "Lady X. will be charmed to see you, I am sure. She is immensely interested in all sorts of social questions, and I shall be delighted to present you. You will be a new reading to her," he added, and smiled.

"I will come and be read," said Joshua; "and I hope to a good end. If I can interest you, and your friends through you, my lord, I shall have done something."

This was the first time that I had seen Joshua really elated with hope of help from the outside. He knew that Lord X. was a man of immense wealth, and that he could, if he would, do wonders for his poor friends. But he did not know how shallow his philanthropic zeal was; how much more a matter of mere amusement than of vital principle. His work among the poor was the work of a superior; and his estimate of his own class, and therefore of himself as a peer, was so curiously great, that he thought his very presence among them ought to prove a kind of balm and moral styptic to all their wounds. He was willing to give when the fit took him; but he would have resented the doctrine of duty, or the right to take. The poor were as curious specimens to him. He never regarded them as men

and women like himself and his class. He scarcely gave them credit for ordinary human feeling even; for he used to say that affections and nerves were both matters of education and refinement, and that the uneducated and unrefined neither loved nor felt as the others. Perhaps he was right. I am not physiologist enough to know much about nerves and pain and the difference of education, so far as that goes; but I think I have seen as much real affection, as much passionate self-abandoning, self-sacrificing love among the poor as there is among the rich. It may be more uncouth, its demonstration more simple too, and less elegantly expressed, but it is there all the same, and maybe in fuller quantity than with fashionable folks who really seem too idle and dispersed to be able to love with either vigour or concentration.

Furthermore, philanthropy to Lord X. was an occupation and a reputation. He had no turn for abstract politics, no head for diplomacy, no taste for literature; he was not an artist nor a mechanician, but he was ambitious, and he liked distinction. So, dabbling among the poor, and touching the grave social problems besetting them delicately, following them to their haunts and relieving their immediate distress, pleased both his kind heart and his vanity; and he did substantial good of a fragmentary kind, if his motives would scarce bear severe scrutiny.

For myself I did not augur much from the association. Less spiritual and less single-minded than my friend, I could also judge better than he of his own power of fascination. Hence I could discern more

clearly than he, how much of Lord X.'s offer of help was the genuine movement of his own soul, and how much was due to the curiosity and amusement which the study of a life and character at once so fresh and whole-hearted as his awakened and promised. But it was not for me to speak, or throw cold water on what might turn out to be such a boon to the cause. If Joshua had wanted my advice, he would have asked it. As he did not ask it, I considered him best able to judge for himself. And yet sometimes I have been sorry that I did not speak

CHAPTER X.

This was Joshua's first introduction into a wealthy house of the upper classes; and from the retinue of servants in their gorgeous liveries thronging the hall, to the little lap-dog on its velvet cushion, the luxury and lavishness he saw everywhere almost stupified him. To a man earning, say some twenty-five shillings a week, and living on less than half—sharing with those poorer than himself, and content to go short that others might be satisfied — the revelation of Lord X.'s house was a sharp and positive pain. The starvation he, the nobleman, had seen in his

wanderings — starvation in all probability relieved for to-day; but to-morrow and the day after and for all future time, till the pauper's grave closed over all?—and then had come back to an abundance, a fastidiousness, of which the very refuse would have been salvation to hundreds; the miserable dwellings he visited, mere styes of filth, immodesty, and vice, where the seeds of physical disease and moral corruption are sown broadcast and from earliest infancy—and then returned to a dwelling like a fairy palace, where every nook and corner was perfect, redolent of all kinds of sweetness and loveliness—to a man of the people like Joshua, fairly oppressive in its richness and grandeur; the gaunt and famine-wasted men and women and children that he had so often met, the little ones brutally treated,

half starved, sworn at, and knocked about, swarming through reeking courts and alleys where the very air of heaven was poisonous—and the lady's lap-dog, with its dainty food, its tender care, well washed, combed, curled, scented, adorned, on a velvet footstool, a toy bought for it to play with: and that man and that woman—this lord and lady—were professing Christians, went regularly to church, believed that Christ was very God, and that every word of the Bible was inspired! It was habit; but at first sight it looked incomprehensible to one who lived among the poor, and was of them.

Lady X. soon came into the room where Joshua and Lord X. were. She was a tall, fair, languid woman, kindly natured but selfish, dissatisfied with her life as it was yet unable to devise anything better for herself,

having no interest anywhere, without children, and evidently not as much in love with her husband as model wives usually are: a woman whose intelligence and physique clashed, the one being restless and the other indolent. Every now and then she took up her husband's "cases," partly out of complaisance to him, partly from profound weariness with her life, and also from the natural kind-heartedness which made her like to do good-natured things and to give pleasure to others. But she soon abandoned them and set them adrift. She was a woman with great curiosity but no tenacity; full of a soft sensual kind of passion that led her into danger as much from idleness as from vice; she loved out of idleness, and worked out of idleness. It was a gain to her to be interested in anything—whether it

was the fashion of the day or the salvation of a human soul; but there was no spirit of self-sacrifice in her, and she would have considered it an impertinence if she had been asked to do a hair's-breadth more than she desired of her own free-will. Had she been born poor, she might have been a grand woman; as she was, she was just a fine lady whose nobler nature was stifled under the weight of idleness and luxury.

But she liked Joshua, and took to him kindly.

She gave him at that first interview a really handsome sum of money for his poorer friends; she promised clothes and soup-tickets, books for his school, toys for his children, good food for his sick. The simple yet so grand earnestness of the man interested her, and she too felt as every

one else did, that here was a master-spirit which had a claim to all men's reverence and admiration. She was not satisfied with this first visit, but Joshua must go to see her again; and after he had been there twice, she of herself offered to come and see him in his lodgings, over the little sweet-stuff shop which Mary Prinsep kept. And Joshua did not forbid her.

Was there ever such an incongruity? The street—East-street—in which we lived, was too narrow for her carriage to come down, so she had to walk the distance to Joshua's rooms. And I shall never forget the sight. Her dainty feet were clothed in satin on which glittered buckles that looked like diamonds; her dress was of apple-blossom-coloured silk that trailed behind her; her bonnet seemed to be just a feather and a

veil; she wore some light lace thing about her that looked like a cloud more than a fabric; and her arms and neck were covered with chains and lockets and bracelets. She was like a fairy queen among the gnomes and blackamoors of an underground mine, like a sweet-scented rose-bush in the midst of a refuse heap as she came picking her way with courage, but with exaggerated delicacy, her footman in his blue and silver at her back, and the mob of the street staring, too much astonished at such an apparition to jeer.

When she came into the little shop and asked for Joshua, I was standing in the doorway (it was on a Sunday) between the shop and Mary's back room; and for the first time I saw Mary in an ugly light. She turned quite white as the lady came in, and

instead of answering, looked round to me with an agony in her face that was indescribable.

"Yes, madam," I said coming forward; "he is up-stairs."

"Do you want him, ma'am?" then asked Mary, the look of pain still in her large fixed eyes; and I thought that the lady, looking at her—for Mary was young and very pretty, as I have said—looked uneasy too. At all events, she looked haughty.

"Yes," she said; but she turned and spoke to me, not to Mary. "Have the goodness to tell him that Lady X. wants to speak to him."

I ran upstairs and told him; and Joshua, without changing his countenance one whit, as if lords and ladies in gorgeous array were our natural visitors and what we were used

to every day, came down and greeted the lady as he would have greeted the baker's wife—neither more nor less respectfully; which means, that he was respectful to every one.

Lady X. made a step forward when he came into the shop, and the blood flew over her face as she gave him her hand.

"Now, you must let me see where you live, and how you do such wonders," she said, with the most undefinable but unmistakable accent of coaxing in the voice.

And Joshua saying quietly; "Are you not too fine to come up our stairs, Lady X.? —we do our best to keep them clean, Mary, don't we? but they are not used to such-like feet on them;" gave her his hand smiling.

"They will be used to mine, I hope, often,"

said my lady kindly. "You know I have taken a great interest in your work, Mr. Davidson, and I am going to help where I can."

"If you will come this way then, my lady, I will show you all I have on hand at the present moment," said Joshua moving towards the stairs.

And again the lady blushed; and her long silk skirts trailed behind her with a curious rustling noise; and we heard her light boot-heels go tap, tap, up the stairs, and her chains and trinkets jingle.

Then Mary turned to me, and said with a wild kind of look; "John! John! she is here for no good! She will harm more than she helps. What call has she to come here? who wants her? She will only do us all a mischief!"

She turned her face to the window and burst into tears.

"Mary! what ails you?" I said, vaguely; for I was shocked, and did not rightly understand her. I seemed to feel something I could not give a name to—a pain and a queer kind of doubt; but indeed it was all chaotic, and all I knew was that I was sorry. "You know," I went on trying to comfort her, "that money and worldly influence at Joshua's back would give him all he wants. His hands are so weak now for want of both these things. Why should we be sorry, dear, that he has the chance of them?"

"She has come for no good!" was all that Mary would say; and I could only wonder at an outburst unlike anything I had ever seen before.

My lady stayed a long time upstairs, and poor Mary's agony during her visit never relaxed. At last she came down, flushed and radiant. Her eyes were softer and darker, her face looked younger and more tender; she even glanced kindly at me as she passed me, saying to Joshua in a voice as sweet as a silver bell; "And this is the John you have been telling me about?—he looks a good fellow!—and is this Mary?" but she was not quite so tender to Mary; and she added, in rather a displeased tone of voice; "Girl! you look very young to keep house by yourself, and have young men lodgers!"

"Ah, my lady, you forget that our girls have not the care taken of them that yours have," said Joshua gently. "So soon as a girl of ours can get her living, she does."

"Well, I hope that Mary will be a good girl, and do you credit," said my lady coldly.

She shook hands then with Joshua, but, with her hand still in his, turned to him and, with the sweetest smile I have ever seen on woman's face, said in the same strange caressing way; "I must ask you to be kind enough to take me to my carriage, Mr. Davidson. I think my footman must have gone to keep the coachman company; and I should scarcely like to go down the street alone."

"Certainly not," said Joshua, and led her, still holding her hand, out from the shop and into the little street to where her carriage was waiting for her.

"Mind the shop for me, John," said Mary; and with a great sob she ran

away and shut herself up in her own room.

She would have been ashamed I know, to let Joshua see that she was crying, and all for nothing, too; only because a fine lady, smelling of sweet scents and wearing a rich silk gown, had passed through the shop.

As for him, he came back without a ruffle on his quiet, mild face. There was no flush of gratified vanity on it; nothing but just that inward, absorbed look, that look of peace and love which beautified him at all times. As he passed through, he looked round for Mary; but I told him she was bad with her head; and as this had the effect of sending him into her room to look after her, poor Mary's attempt at concealment came to nothing. But I don't think Joshua found out why she was crying.

Many a day after this my lady's carriage came to the entrance of our wretched street, and my lady herself, like a radiant vision, picked her way among garbage and ruffianism down to the little sweet-stuff shop where ha'pennyworths of "bulls'-eyes" were sold to young children by a girl who had once been a street-walker, and where the upstairs rooms were tenanted by two journeymen carpenters. It was an anomaly that could not last; but the very sharpness of the contrast gave it interest in her eyes; and while the novelty continued it was like a scene out of a play in which she was the heroine. So, at least, I judged her; and the more I think of the whole affair, the more sure I feel that I am right.

And then Joshua's handsome face and

dignity of look and manner might count for something.

She (the lady) was truly good and helpful to Joshua all the time this fad of hers lasted; for that it was only a fad, without stability or roots, the sequel proved. She brought him clothes and money, and seemed ready to do all she could for him. He had only to tell her that he wanted such and such help, and she gave it, aye, like a princess!

What took place between them neither I nor any one can say. Joshua never opened his lips on the subject; and after that day, by tacit consent all round, the name of Lord and Lady X. was a dead letter among us. All I know is, that one day, when she had come down to our place as so often now, my lady, flushed, haughty, trembling too, but changed

somehow, with a sad, disordered face instead of the half-sleepy sweetness usual to it, came downstairs—not this time holding Joshua's hand; he following her, pale and troubled-looking; that she passed through the little shop quickly and impatiently, with never a glance towards Mary or me; that at the door she turned round, and said sharply; "You need not give yourself the trouble, Mr. Davidson, to come with me—I can find my way alone;" and that Joshua answered with more tenderness and humility of tone and manner than I had ever seen or heard in him before; "My lady, I must disobey you: I cannot let you go through the street alone." And that he followed her out, bare-headed, but at a little distance from her—not beside her.

This was the last time we saw her; nor

did Lord X. keep up any association with my friend. And I heard afterwards, quite accidentally, that he had said soon after this, he really "could not countenance that man Davidson: he was too offensively radical in his opinions, and a presuming fellow besides."

But word came to us both that my lady had found out all about Mary, and that she had expressed herself insulted and revolted at Joshua's allowing her to enter a house kept by such a creature.

"It was all very well to be compassionate and helpful," she had said; "but no amount of charity justified that man Davidson in his proceedings with such a woman. Or, if he chose to associate with her himself, he ought to have warned her (her ladyship), that *she* should not have made the mis-

take of speaking to her as to a proper person."

So this first and last attempt at aristocratic co-operation fell to the ground; and Society peremptorily refused to endorse a man who had set himself to live the life after Christ.

If Joshua was sorry for the loss he had so mysteriously sustained, poor Mary was not. All during the lady's visits she had drooped and pined, till I thought she was in a bad way, and going to be worse. Ah! this was a bitter time to me, for I loved her like my own; and I loved Joshua and his work and his life better than my own life; and I was perplexed, and in a manner torn to pieces, among so many feelings. But she revived after the day when the lady passed through the shop with her sad, proud, disordered

face, and when Joshua came back from seeing her to her carriage, like a man who has had a blow and is still dazed by it. She waited on him after this, more assiduously than ever. She seemed to live only to please him. The place was the very perfection of cleanliness. Even my lady's palace could not have been more wholesome or more pure. The squalor of the shell, so to speak, and the poverty of the inside, was concealed or made to be forgotten by the exquisite neatness and cleanliness with which it was all kept; and when Joshua's countenance came back again, as it did after awhile, to its usual sweet serenity, Mary's also came to its peace, and the cloud that had hung over it like a distemper passed away.

"It will not do, John!" he said to me one

day, some time after: "for the aristocracy to come down to the poor is a mistake. They are different creatures altogether, with different laws of honour and morality among themselves from what we know anything about. And the gulf is too wide to be bridged over by just one here, and another there, coming like the old Israelitish spies among us, to see the nakedness of the land. They do a little good for the time, but it is good that bears no blessing with it, and is not lasting. We must work up by ourselves into a state nearer to them in material good; but not," he added, as if by an after-thought, "in looseness of principle. That, however, has come only from idleness; and if great people had imperative duties and the absolute need of exertion, we should hear of fewer divorce scandals, fewer turf catas-

trophes, and the like, than we do now. However, that is not our affair. We are here to work on our own account, not to judge of others."

"It is an old saying, Joshua, but a true one, 'extremes meet,'" said I. "The very poor have no taste for refined pleasure, and indeed no power of indulging it if they had; and the very rich, sated with all that is given to them by their position, devise new excitements of an ignoble kind. I suppose that is something like it?"

"I suppose so," he answered. "At all events, there can be no such thing as levelling down. It would be no righteousness to bring the rich, the refined, the well educated down to the level of the poor; but to raise up the masses, and to impose on the upper classes positive duties, this is the only way

in which the difference between high and low can be lessened. And if this can be done free of national revolt and bloodshed, it will be a godlike work, and the blessed solution of the greatest difficulty the world has seen yet. It cannot be a good thing that some men have to work till all the strength of intellect is worked out of them, while others are lapped in such idleness that all theirs is either bemused and stagnated, or turned to evil issues for want of being wholesomely used. Come how it may, it has to come—this more equal distribution of the better things of life. I do not mean that the duchess will have to share her velvet cushions with the seamstress; but it has to be that, either by education or improved machinery, or both, there will not be the enormous difference there is now between the

duchess and the seamstress. We have made a great parade lately of our sympathy with the North, on the ground of emancipation; but Society here in London holds slaves as arbitrarily and as cruelly as ever the Southern planters did; and its vested interests, however demoralising, are as sacred to us as were the vested interests of the planter to him. I will never again try a fraternal union with a rich house. When the workingmen have their political and social rights, and have utilised their leisure to refine and elevate, to beautify and adorn their lives, then, when we are radically equal, we can meet as men and brothers. As we are now, we are experiments to some, mere temporary amusements to others, inferiors to all; and we pin our faith to a straw—hang our golden hopes on gossamer—

when we look for vital co-operation from them."

"I thought Joshua would find her out in time," was Mary's comment. "I took stock of her from the first, and saw she was no good."

CHAPTER XI.

I HAVE said so much of the personal charities of Joshua that I seem to have thrown into the shade, by comparison, his political life and action; and yet this was the more important of the two. The extreme section of republican working men, though they did not go in for his religious views, made use of his political zeal; and when work was bad to get, sometimes he was sent as a delegate, sometimes he went of his own accord, to the various towns that needed either encouragement or awakening; where he gave lectures on the necessity of labour

keeping a close front against the serried ranks of capital; on the lawfulness and desirability of trades' unions and strikes, when occasion demands; on the political worth of a republic that grows naturally out of monarchy and oligarchy, as manhood grows out of childhood; on the need of the working classes raising themselves to a higher level in mind and circumstance than that which they occupy now; on the beauty of social and moral freedom; and on the right of each man to a fair share of the primary essentials for good living. And all this was mixed up with that fervid practical Christianity of his, which gave a new and holier aspect to every question he handled.

Joshua believed in the religion of politics. He often said that, were Christ to come

again in this day, He would be more of a politician than a theologian; and that He would teach men to work for the coming of the kingdom of heaven on earth, rather through the general elevation of the material condition of the masses than by either ritual or dogma.

"You can't make a man a saint in mind," I have heard him say more than once, "when you keep him like a beast in body;" and "higher wages, better food, better lodgment, and better education will do more to make men real Christians than all the churches ever built."

No man was more convinced than he that sin and misery are the removable results of social circumstances, and that poverty, ignorance, and class-distinctions consequent, are at the root of all the crimes and wretched-

ness afloat. The evil lying in that great curse of partial civilisation—that upas tree of caste—by which this Christian world of ours, with its religion of brotherhood and socialism, is overshadowed, pained him most of all. The caste of the rich, with its product, the class antagonism of the poor—what a sorry satire on the religion of Jesus of Nazareth, that poor, unlearned man of the people, whom we have exalted into God and now worship with gorgeous ceremonial, while despising every one of the social doctrines He and His disciples preached! However, Joshua did his best to rouse men to a consciousness of Christ, and to the acceptance of His teaching of human equality; and though steadily opposed to all doctrines of violence, was always the passionate upholder of the doctrine of

duty on the one side and the theory of rights on the other.

He had often a sore time of it. His discourses roused immense antagonism, and he was sometimes set upon and severely handled by the men to whom he spoke. I have seen him left for dead twice in the rough monarchical towns. But he worked as the Master had worked before him; simply changing the methods to be more in harmony with the times; going on his way calm, unshaken, cheerful, ever ready to face the worst and take what danger might arise without blenching; of a steadfast heart and a loyal spirit; looking up to God, living after Christ, and loving the humanity that blackguarded and nearly killed him as his reward. Tears are in my eyes, rough man as I am, when I remember Joshua Davidson, his life

and works, and what the world he lived but to better said of him and did to him. I have known swindlers and murderers more gently entreated. Of a truth, the age of martyrs has not passed away; as any one may prove in his own person who will set himself to enlarge the close boroughs of thought, and to rectify the injustice of society.

The war broke out between France and Prussia, and at the first the tide of liberal sympathies went with Prussia, as representing opposition to the Empire. But as time went on, sides changed, and moderates backed up Prussia, while the ultra-Tories and the Republicans went with France; the one hoping to see the Empire restored, the other longing for the establishment of liberty. And Joshua's sympathies changed with the

rest I ought perhaps to have made more than I have done of his intimacy with certain foreign socialists and reformers. Félix Pyat I have already spoken of. He was one of our warmest friends; and, to go to a very materialistic part of the subject, his association with us both was of great value, not only for the sake of the man himself, but also for the opportunity he afforded us of learning the French language.

When the Commune declared itself on the eighteenth of March, none but those in the centre of advanced political feeling can tell what passionate hopes were awakened in the men who care for liberty and believe in social progress. Comtists, Internationalists, Secularists, Socialists, Republicans, by what name soever the doctrine of liberty and brotherhood may be proclaimed, we all looked over

to Paris with an anxiety that was as painful as if we stood watching the struggles of a beloved friend with our own hands bound. There were men whom that time sent mad with hope and fear; and some that I could name are now lying cold in their graves for sorrow at the failure of the righteous cause. The Commune, successful in Paris, meant the emancipation of the working clases here, and later on the peaceable establishment of the Republic; which we all believe *has to come*, whether peaceably established or not.

On the nineteenth of March, Joshua resolved to go over to Paris, to help, so far as he could, in the cause of humanity. I never saw him so full of enthusiasm. Every now and then, especially of late, his hope, if not his zeal, had slackened a little before

the magnitude of the task he had undertaken at home. Alone as he was, not only unsupported by any influential men whatsoever, but actively opposed by many, he found his work of amelioration very hard, and the results unsatisfactory. But to help in the establishment of an organised liberty like the Commune—that seemed the best thing any man loving his fellow-men could do; and accordingly, he and I agreed to go over at once. And poor Mary Prinsep was broken hearted. But, sorry as he was to give her sorrow, his duty was too clear before him to let him hesitate; and, stifling whatever grief of private affection he might leave behind him, he set his face toward Paris; and after some difficulties and dangers we arrived there, "let into the trap" as so many before and after us.

As this is not a history of the Commune it is not necessary to say much about the leaders. Some he loved like his very brothers; others, chiefly of the noisier sort, he distrusted as leaders, and would rather have seen subordinate to better-balanced minds. He might not too, have always agreed even with the men he loved. Being men, they were fallible; but they did honestly for the best, and the abuse hurled at them—a "nest of miscreants," a "handful of brigands," and the like—was as untrue as it was illogical. There were among the Communist leaders men as noble as ever lived upon earth; men, whatever their special creed, the most after the pattern of Christ in their faithful endeavour to help the poor and to raise the lowly, to rectify the injustice of conventional distinctions, and to give all men an equal

chance of being happy, virtuous, and human.

Never had Paris been so free from crime as during the administration of the Commune —never so pure. All the vice which had disgraced the city ever since the congenial Empire had existed, was swept clean out of it; and not the most reckless vilifiers of these latter-day Christ-men could make out a case of peculation, of greed, or of uncleanness among them. Skilled artisans abandoned their lucrative callings for the starvation-pay of a franc and a half a day, and set themselves —not to amass wealth, not to gain power, nor to live in luxury and pleasure—but to plan for the best for their fellow-men, and to sketch out a future glorious alike for France and the whole world. The working man vindicated then his claim to be en-

trusted with his own self-government; and one of the brightest pages of modern history, in spite of all its mistakes, is that wherein the artisan government of '71 wrote its brief but noble record on the heart of Paris.

The most fatal thing of that time, however, was the unconquerable distrust of the people. Long used to tyranny and treachery as they had been, they seemed unable to accept any man as a true patriot, not plotting underhand for his own advantage. They trusted no one—not even their sworn and tested friends. And we can scarcely wonder at it. Twenty years of Louis Napoleon, the military command of Trochu, the history of the past Imperial administration and the present Imperial war, had eaten into their very hearts, and taken all the faith out of them. And the consequence was, that even the men

now heading the great liberation movement, the best and most unselfish of the "sinless Cains" of history, were suspected by the very city they were sacrificing themselves to save.

But Paris was mad—mad with despair, with famine, with shame, disease, excitement. The gaunt frames, the hollow cheeks, the wild eyes that met you at every turn, were eloquent witnesses of the state of men's minds; and I shall never forget the mournful impression it all made on me. No one looked sane, save the leaders, and perhaps a few of us more cool-headed Anglo-Saxons. The Poles, who had flocked in to take part in a cause they identified with their own broken nationality, added the fever of their political despair to the fire consuming the vitals of the Parisians; the Italians poured

in their bitter hatred to the priests as oil on flames—emblems to them of tyranny, treachery, ignorance, and persecution they could not be brought to acknowledge even the good that is in them, but were ever their unrelenting enemies; the republicans of all nations gathered into the struggling city, each with his own specific and his own desires; everywhere was fierce excitement, and the conflict of hope and fear, high endeavour and deep despair; while it grew clearer and clearer, as the days passed by, that the cause of the freedom of Paris, and with Paris of Europe—the cause of the rights and better organisation of labour—was lost for the hour, and that hope only was left for the future. The city was overmatched, and liberty was doomed. It was but a question of time; the Commune had to die, and

it resolved to die fighting and unsurrendered.

Of all the Communists, Delescluze was the one Joshua loved most, because he esteemed him most; and this, not forgetting his old loyalty and friendship to Félix Pyat, nor denying reverence and love to many others. But there was something special in Delescluze. His heroic spirit, his martyr's life, his unbroken courage, his unquenchable faith, and that quiet sadness which seemed like the sadness of a prophet—all that he was, and had been, raised one's admiration more than any other man among them was able to do; and Joshua was one of his chosen friends. We were both present at the sitting where he vowed, in answer to a taunt flung like a bomb-shell among the members, not to survive the insurrection. The effect was

electrical; it was like a leaf out of old-world history, telling of a time when patriotism was a passion of which men were not ashamed. And when that noble old man rose so quietly, so solemnly, with no theatrical display or frothy excitement, but calmly registered the vow he afterwards kept with such sublime courage, it was as a torch that lighted every heart and soul there with Pentecostal fire. All knew what his words meant; and we, who shared his private thoughts and feelings as brothers, knew perhaps more than some others. Ah! the Society that needs such victims as Deles-cluze to bolster up its rottenness had better crumble to dust as it stands.

CHAPTER XII.

It was early in the evening, and we were walking slowly along the Boulevard Montmartre, when I saw a wayworn woman coming with staggering steps towards us, but at some distance yet. Her dress was torn; her pale face was turned anxiously to each passer-by, scanning every one with a wild scrutiny, not curious so much as full of yearning; her fair hair was hanging in disordered masses about her face and neck; but when I tried to speak, pointing her out to Joshua, something in my throat prevented me. There was no need to speak; she saw

us almost as soon as I had recognised her, and, holding out her hands, as we came up hurriedly, said with a plaintive kind of weary smile, "I knew that I should light on you, Joshua!"

Then she sank in a heap at his feet, her arms stretched out, and her fair hair trailed in the dust.

Poor loving, faithful Mary! She had travelled for the last days on foot; and if we men had suffered on our journey, she had suffered ten times more. It seems she had set out almost immediately after us, though she had been more than three weeks longer on the road. She was but an ignorant girl, it must be remembered; she had not come yet to the point of knowing that obedience was even a higher quality than love, and that love is best shown by obedience

Here she was however, and we took her home to our lodgings in the Rue Blanche; and the concierge laughed significantly when asked for a room where she might be lodged. It would have been better to have refused her admission altogether, than to have laughed and leered as he did. The blood came into Joshua's pale face for just a moment; but there was no likelihood of his failing to do right for fear of its looking like wrong, so he gravely gave Mary his hand, and led her to our apartment. She was full of self-reproach and contrition when she saw the false position in which she had placed him; but he would not hear a word. "If you have been less than wise, my girl," he said, "you have been true of heart; so we will balance the one against the other, and cry quits!"

This concierge was a man who, from the first, inspired me with disgust and a vague dread. He was a red-haired, coarse-featured, ruffianly-looking fellow, by name Legros; now in the time of the Commune a noisy republican; but one could fancy him under the Empire standing with his greasy cap in hand shouting, "Vive l'Empereur!" with the loudest. He was a man who had not, I should say, one single guiding principle of life save selfishness—a frank, cynical, unabashed selfishness—a selfishness that believed in nothing save self; and to whom amassing miserable little sums of money to be spent in sensuality, was the ultimate of human cleverness and happiness; a man without faith, honour, justice, or mercy. I do not think I am too hard in my judgment of him; for he was one of the men

who make the theory of the devil very easy to believe.

Among the sentiments professed by Legros was that of disbelief in womanly virtue. He laughed at the idea of purity as possible in the friendship of men and women, and of course had his own ideas about Mary; which it seems he expressed pretty plainly. It was some gross insult, I never heard precisely what, that he offered to the poor girl which brought the whole thing to a conclusion. We had both been out, leaving her at home; and when we came back we found her in a state of excitement and indignation at something that had happened during our absence. She told Joshua, not me; and indeed, the first I rightly heard of it was when Joshua came back from downstairs, where he had been into the porter's

lodge, and had thrashed Legros to within an inch of his life. This was the first and only time he had ever raised his hand against any one; and I was sorry he had not left the job to me. I would have done it as well, and he would have kept his hands clean. Yet for all this, when Legros, who had been wounded by a chance splinter, was in the hospital, Joshua attended to him specially, and mainly kept him alive by his care.

No one worked harder in these days of dread and turmoil than Joshua. This was what he had come to do. Among the poor and starving, the wounded and dismayed, there he was, day after day, helping all who needed so far as he could, tender as a woman, faithful and strong as a hero. Or he did the work of the Commune, as he might be ordered; and they had no more trustworthy

official. Never a thought of self came in to weaken or distract him. For several nights at a stretch he did not go to bed, and he seemed to have the strength of half-a-dozen men, and to be kept up by an almost supernatural power. For the famine that was wasting the city was touching him with no tender hand. Day by day he got paler and thinner; his eyes, always bright and as if they were looking at something farther off than we could see, were sunk and dark and hollow; his cheeks were drawn and pale, his lips blackening and parched. But he never complained; he never seemed to think of himself at all; and if he had been without food for twelve hours or twenty-four, the chances were that he would share his scanty rations with the first passer-by who looked famine-stricken. Mary too was suffering

from the want and privation of all kinds with which we were afflicted. We did what we could for her, be sure. If my life could have bought hers or his, I would have laid it down as willingly as I would have given them my bitter crust. But they bore up bravely, both of them; and she helped too with the sick and wounded. She was let to nurse in the English ambulances, where she was interpreted when necessary; and even at the worst her face as she went softly about the beds was pleasant for the sick and dying to look at. And here let me say how entirely in these late years all trace of her former condition had passed out of it. Purified by love; that was it; so that she looked now as if she might have come out of a convent. This is no fancy of my own. Any one who knew Joshua, and consequently

Mary Prinsep whom he had saved, will endorse what I say.

Things were looking wild and stormy, and the day of our doom was coming near. The Versaillists were too strong for us, and the hope of European freedom was over for the time; only for the time! For so sure as day follows on the night, so surely will the law of human rights follow on the tyrannies and oppressions which have so long ruled the world; and the faith for which the Commune bled, will be triumphant. But for the present, God help this poor sorrowful world of ours!

The Vicaire-Général had gone to Versailles, but he had not returned; and no answer had been vouchsafed to the offer made, now I think for the third time, to release the Archbishop and the other hostages for the one

exchange of Blanqui. How often must the story be told? And will it ever be acknowledged by those who care only, right or wrong, to fasten the stain of blood-guiltiness on the Commune, that the real murderer of Monseigneur Darboy, and the rest, was M. Thiers? He knew what would happen, as well as a man knows what will happen if he puts a lighted match to a barrel of gunpowder. He knew that the hostages would be sacrificed. Inflamed as Paris was, surrounded by an enemy that treated her like a wild beast, and even shook hands with the common foe for her destruction, her best men spoken of as creatures below humanity, her hour of humiliation and bloody agony at hand—he knew there would be no calm reasoning out of consequences, no quiet acceptance of the result. Men's blood was up; and the

result was foreseen and played for. It was a heavy stake to pay; but to discredit the Commune, and attach to it the ineffaceable stain of blood-guiltiness, was worth even an Archbishop and some sixty other lives!

We were at the prison during the time of the execution. It would be impossible to describe distinctly how it all took place. No one has, and no one ever will. The whole thing was confusion. No person knew exactly what was being done, or by whom; and no one had any recognised authority. The leaders of the Commune were fighting singly at the barricades, and for the time all executive government was at an end. The tumult and excitement at the prison was beyond all power of description. Men went and came; orders were given and contradicted; women shrieked, some for blood

and some for mercy; youths shouted; and through all, and above all, we heard the roar of the cannon, the whistling of the shells, and saw the smoke and flame of Paris rising up against the sky.

Joshua, mounted on a gun-barrel, pleaded for the lives of the unfortunate men.

"The work that the Commune had pledged itself to do," he said, "was to help on the freedom of the working classes, by proving to the world their nobility and power of self-government. The slaughter of unarmed men would do none of this. It would give their enemies a just handle against them, for it was a baseness unworthy of them—an act neither human nor noble, neither righteous nor generous. Whatever the wrong committed by the Government at Versailles, the innocent ought not to suffer. Let the Com-

mune show itself supreme in virtue at this moment of trial, and put the temptation of blood-guiltiness away from it."

While he spoke Legros drew his revolver from his belt.

"Death to the English traitor!" he cried. "Death to the tool of the priests! he believes in Jesus Christ!"

"Christ! we want no Christs here? Death to the traitor!" shouted one or two of the mob.

Sick with dread for the safety of the man I loved best on earth, I sprang forward and covered Joshua's body with my own; when a fine-looking man—he was one of us then, but, as he is now in office under Thiers, I will not say who he was—quietly struck the revolver from Legros's hand.

"Keep your bullets for your enemies,

fool!—do not give them to your friends," he said; "this man is not a hostage." Then hurriedly, aside, to Joshua, "Escape while you can; I will cover your retreat, and divert their attention."

"Oh, that I had the voice of a God to teach them wisdom!" cried Joshua.

"Pshaw mon ami!" said our friend, contemptuously. "Your best wisdom now is to save your own life—not to try and teach men anything."

"Out with you, spies, traitors, priest-ridden Tartuffes!—we want no sympathizers with tyranny here!" shouted an excited, half-mad looking man close to us. "Out with them, citoyens!"

And at the word half-a-dozen men and women, shrieking and gesticulating, laid hands on us and roughly thrust us out. I

thought it fortunate we left with our lives, for indeed, the wild, surging crowd was in no mood for mercy just then; and a couple of lives, more or less, were of small account at that moment. Howbeit, we were flung out with many a blow and bitter word; and just as we were going through the gateway a loud yell burst forth, a volley was fired, and we knew that the policy of Versailles had triumphed.

A few Parisians—*not the Commune*—had fallen into the snare prepared for them; and the blood was shed which was to cover Liberty with shame, until men can hear and learn the truth.

The last day came. The guns of our forts were silent; the men were fighting in the streets, desperate, conquered, but not craven. The Versaillists were pouring in

like wolves let loose; Paris was drenched with blood, and in flames. And then the cry of the *pétroleuses* went up like the fire that shot against the sky. What mattered it that it was a lie? It gave the Party of Order another reason, if they had wanted any, to excuse their lust of blood. It was their saturnalia, and they did not stint themselves. The arms, that had served them so ill against the Prussians, served them but too well against their countrymen; and the short hour of a nation's hope was at an end in the bloody reprisals of brothers, that exceeded all we have ever heard or read of in a victorious foreign army.

I had been separated from my friends for more than twenty-four hours. The house where we had lodged was in flames; and when I went to seek information at a Com-

munist friend's, De Lancy, I found a group of three by the concierge door—himself, his young wife, and a little daughter not two years old, lying as if asleep, save for the blood that was their bed. They had been bound together and shot. Not one, but hundreds and thousands of such cases stand recorded in the history of that terrible moment, when the victorious Versaillists marched into Paris, and society revenged itself on the men who had dared to dream of redressing its wrongs; and among the terrible sights that met me, the evidences of brutal, wanton, sickening murder, I had a shuddering dread that I should find Joshua and Mary. I was never so nearly mad as I was that day when I wandered about the bloody streets of Paris, looking for my friends; sorrow for the lost cause, horror at

the scenes I encountered, and fear for those I loved, all combining to render life in that hour simply torture.

At last I caught a glimpse of Mary crossing the street, carrying a wounded child in her arms, and making for the ambulance. I called to her, and hurried after her; but, weak as I was with excitement and want of food, I could not make my voice reach her.

Just then, cap in hand and bowing low, Jacques Legros rushed out of a ruined house and stopped the captain of a troop that came marching down the street. He pointed in a frantic way to Mary.

"V'la, mon Capitaine," he said, weeping and sobbing loudly, as one in the greatest distress; "c'est la cocotte d'un Communiste Anglais—c'est une pétroleuse! Elle a fait

sauter la maison de ma mère. C'est ce que je sais, moi!"

"Prends-la," said the Captain in an odd, half bitter, half matter-of-fact way. And Mary was seized by a couple of his men, and brought up close to where he stood.

"C'est une jolie cible, ça!" he said with a brutal laugh. "C'est dommage—une belle fille comme ça! Mais on ne doit pas être pétroleuse, ma fille. Fi donc!"

"I have done no harm," said Mary, with her wild eyes searching his in vain for pity. "I have done only what good I could to all!"

"Is setting fire to honest women's houses doing good, wretch?" said the Captain, suddenly changing his mocking manner for one of ferocious sternness, and speaking in

broken English. "A pétroleuse?—you are not fit to live!"

"She is no pétroleuse," I cried.

But as I spoke a blow laid me senseless; and when I came to myself I found myself lying wounded on the ground, with Mary stretched beside me—shot through the heart.

It was then night time; but soon after I recovered, and just as I was in the first agony of understanding what had happened, Joshua, and the same man who had saved his life at the time of the murder of the hostages in the prison, came up to where we lay, searching for us.

I have no more to tell of this episode Our Mary was buried tenderly, lovingly; and I laid part of my life in her grave What Joshua felt I never knew exactly

He did not say much ; and though once I saw him, when he thought I was asleep, lay his head on his hands and weep bitterly, he never gave me a hint as to whether he was grieving at the loss of Mary, or at the failure of the cause. Whichever it was, it nearly broke him down ; and ill as I was myself, with a bad wound and a smashed collar-bone, I saw that his distress was greater than my own, and needed more consideration. I was desperately afraid more than once that he was going to die. For myself, I felt as if I could not die while Joshua lived, perhaps to want me.

However that might be, we neither of us came to grief of that kind. I got well in time ; and when I could travel, and a fitting opportunity arrived, our friend, who had kept us all this time in safety, got us sent off to

England. And right glad was I when we landed safe in the Old Country once more. Joshua was glad too. He had suffered much from the confinement, inertia, and disappointment of the last few weeks;—coming too, after a time of such intense hope and excitement; and once in England, he thought he could do something for the Humanity he loved, for the Truth to which he had consecrated his life.

CHAPTER XIII.

We found times hard on our return. As for work, it was simply impossible to be had where we were known. If Joshua was shunned as a consorter with bad characters when he took vicious humanity by the hand, and sought to cleanse the foul and raise the degraded by the practical application of Christian precepts unsupported by sectarian organisation, what was he now, when besmirched with the Communistic doctrines of liberty, equality, and fraternity? Ordinary men thinking ordinary thoughts shrank from him in moral horror. He stood before them

as the embodiment of murder and rapine, the representative of social destruction and the godless license of anarchy. He was a Communist: and that to most men and women of the day, means one wilfully and willingly guilty of every crime under heaven.

"They must be told the truth, John," he said to me one day; "whether they will accept it or not rests with themselves. But the work has to be done, and I have to do it, let what will be the result."

"It will be a bad one for you, Joshua," I said.

"So be it, my son. Preaching the Gospel brought most of the apostles to a bad end—as the world counts endings; and I am only following in their steps. I have got my Gospel to preach: the same our Master

taught, if we could but get the world to see it!"

But that was just what neither he nor any one else has yet got the world to do, and I doubt it will be long before they will.

Work at the bench being impossible, being indeed scarcely the thing he wanted at this moment, Joshua took up again the hungry trade of political lecturer to working men, and went about the country explaining the Communistic doctrines, and showing their apostolic origin. His position was this. He did not justify all the actions of all the men at the head of affairs during the short reign of the Commune in Paris: but he warmly defended the cardinal points of their creed, as the logical outcome of Christianity in politics. The abolition of priestly supre-

macy in a man's social and daily life; the rights of labour as equal with those of capital; the dignity of humanity, including the doctrine of human equality; fraternal care for the poor, and the obligation laid on the strong to help the weak; the merely experimental nature of society, whence follows the righteousness of radical changes which shall break down the strongholds of tyranny and injustice, and help on general amelioration; the iniquity of maintaining the vested rights of wrong; and the right of the people to self-government. These were the doctrines he preached; but which he failed to induce the world to accept. They called him—as he called himself—a Communist; and the name offended, so that they would not listen to any kind of statement.

"You burnt Paris," said one. "You mur-

dered innocent men," said another. "You insulted God and religion," said a third. A fourth—"You outraged morality, and lived in the most hideous licentiousness." "You would take our hard-earned savings from us, and reduce all men to one level—the idle with the industrious, and the ignorant with the educated," said a fifth. "You would rob the capitalist, and by so doing destroy the very labour you uphold," said a sixth.

And when he answered—"You mistake; I give up the blunders of the Commune, and the wrong-doing of which some of its members were guilty, only suggesting that they did not do all that was said of them; as neither did the early Christians slaughter children for their Eucharist, nor indulge in gross sin in their love feasts, as the Jews

said of them; but I maintain the doctrine. Let me set that clearly before you, and I will leave the rest to time and God"—as often as not they turned against him, and hounded him out of their towns.

"We want none of your French atheism here," they said, when they were religiously inclined;—"None of your Red-republicanism" when they were conservative.

But where parties were anything like even enough to get him a handful of sympathizers, there was generally a fight; and then the magistrates ordered him out of the place, with insult from the bench; and in many towns they refused him permission to speak at all. The very name of the Commune is the red rag to English thought; and all reason is lost when it is the question of telling the truth about men who tried to get

the working classes equal rights and recognition with the moneyed ones.

At last we came to a place called Lowbridge, where a friend of ours lived—a member of the International; and here Joshua announced himself to give a lecture on Communism, in the Town Hall. His programme stated the usual thing, that he, Joshua Davidson, would show how Christ and his apostles were Communists, and how they preached the same doctrines which the Commune of Paris strove to embody; allowing for the differences of method inherent to the differences of social arrangements that have grown up during a lapse of nearly two thousand years.

The evening came, and Joshua prepared to go to the meeting he had called; and I along with him. Our friend had warned

him to expect an unfriendly audience, but Joshua was not a man to be daunted by a few stern faces; and I do not think I ever saw him so possessed with the spirit of what he had set out to teach as he was this evening. Yet also I noticed something in him that was not exactly like himself. Grave as he always was, to-night he was grave to sadness; a solemn kind of sadness; like a martyr going to his death, steadfast, testifying always, but—knowing that he was to die.

He shook hands with me at the side door cordially before going up, saying, "God bless you, John, you have been a true friend to me;" then smiled at me; and, the moment having come, stepped on to the platform.

In the first row, right in front of him, was the former clergyman of Trevalga; him

we lads used to call behind his back, "Mr. Grand," because of his pomposity and haughtiness. He had lately been given the rich living of Lowbridge, and one or two stately appointments connected with the Cathedral and such like. I do not know what they were exactly, but they had made him a man of supreme importance, not only in Lowbridge itself, but in all the neighbourhood round about.

I saw Joshua's face change as he caught the clergyman's eye. It did not change to cowardice, but to a kind of eager look, like a man taking hold of an enemy; and then it passed away into his usual abstracted unconsciousness of self, as he came quietly to the front and prepared to speak. But at the first word there broke out such a tumult as I had never heard in any public

meeting, and I have been at a few rough and rowdy ones too. The yells, hisses, cat-calls, whoopings were indescribable. It was impossible to be heard. I believe the roar of a lion would have been overpowered. Joshua stood there quiet and dignified as ever, looking straight in among them, waiting for the tumult to cease. It only ceased when Mr. Grand rose, and standing up on the chair on which he had been sitting, waved his hand for silence.

"Friends," he said, "I am glad that by your honest English love of law and God, you have shown what you think of the poison this demagogue would have poured into your ears. I know that man well," pointing to Joshua; "I have known him from a boy; and I can bear my testimony to the fact that he has been an ill-conditioned,

presumptuous, insolent fellow from the first. I know that he has led an infamous life in London ; and that he kept such a disorderly house the police were obliged to interfere ; and he was imprisoned for the offence. Loose women, thieves, burglars—all the scum of the earth have been his chosen companions ; and, to crown all, he went over to Paris at that awful time of the Commune, when, if ever hell was let loose on earth it was then, and joined himself to that band of miscreants who disgraced the very name of humanity. And now he has the audacity to come before you, honest and sober men of Lowbridge, loving your queen and country, abiding by the laws, and fearing God as I hope you all do. And what for ?—to praise that pandemonium of vice and crime—the Paris Commune — and blasphemously to

liken those fiends in human shape to our Lord and the holy apostles; to incite you to a rebellion as bloody as that; and more than all this--to pick your pockets of your honest wages, that he, an idle vagabond, who won't work, may wander about the country, sowing his poison everywhere, while living on the fat of the land. Give him your minds, my men; and let him understand that Lowbridge is not the place for a godless rascal like him at any time--and by no means the place for an atheist and a Communist!"

Then he got down, and the men cheered him as lustily as they had hissed Joshua.

I will do Mr. Grand the justice to say that I do not think he intended his words should have the effect they did have. Gentlefolks do not often incite to riot; and a clergyman does not like to be the wirepuller for a mur

der. But, maddened by their own misconceptions to begin with, and excited still more by their parson's abuse and encouragement to violence as it were, the audience lost all self-control. A dozen men leaped on the platform, and in a moment I saw Joshua under their feet. It was in vain then for Mr. Grand to cry "Order"—for the two policemen at the doors to be sent for—for me to lay about me as hard as I was handled. The men had it all their own way. They were the representatives of law and order in their own minds, the champions of God and religion, and they regarded it as a sacred duty to take it out of this godless anarchist. Beaten, kicked, held back by a dozen or more, I could not help him. They beat me first; and then the police beat me, and knocked me about savagely with their trun-

cheons, because I struggled to get free, and to get to Joshua. He was lying on the ground, pale and senseless, with a stream of blood slowly flowing from his lips; while the men trampled on him and kicked him, and one, with a fearful oath, kicked him twice on the head. Suddenly a whisper ran round them, and they all drew a little way off; when, at a sign from one of them, the gas was turned down, and the place cleared as if by magic. When the lights were up again, and I went to lift him—he was dead.

I know no more—no more than this, that the man who had lived the life after Christ more exactly than any human being ever known to me, who had given himself to humanity and poured out his strength like water for the sacred cause, who had been loving, tolerant, pitiful to all—that

man was killed by the Christian Party of Order; his memory denounced on the one hand as that of a blood-thirsty revolutionist who was justly punished for his crimes, on the other, as that of a presumptuous and heretical enthusiast who had insulted God and dishonoured the true faith. But the same things were said of the early Christians as have been said of him, of the Communists, and of all reformers of all times.

The world has ever disowned its Best when they came; and every truth has been planted in blood, and its first efforts sought to be checked by lies. So let them rest, our martyrs whom men do not yet know; as neither did they know eighteen hundred years ago the crucified Communist of Galilee—he who dwelt with lepers, made his

friends of sinners, and preached against all the conventional respectabilities which society then held in honour.

The death of my friend has left me not only desolate, but uncertain. For I have come round to the old starting-point again: Is the Christian world all wrong, or is practical Christianity impossible? I see men simply and sincerely devoted to the cause of Humanity, and I hear the world's verdict on them. I hear others, earnest for the dogma of Christianity, rabid against its acted doctrines. They do not care to destroy the causes of misery by any change in social relations; they only attack the sinners for whose sin society is originally responsible. They maintain the unrighteous distinctions of caste as a

religion; and they denounce as delusion, or impiety, the doctrine of universal brotherhood which Christ and His apostles preached and died for. I hear a great deal about faith, and the infidel being an accursed thing; but then I see the practical Christian, like Joshua, held accursed too. What does it all mean? Let us have something definite. If the doctrines of Political Economy are true, if the law of the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest applies absolutely to human society as well as to plants and fishes, let us then be frank, and candidly admit that Christianity, in its help to the poor and weak and in its patience with the sinner, is a craze, and let us abolish the pretence of a faith which influences neither our political institutions nor our social arrangements; and

which ought not to influence them. If Christ was right, modern Christianity is wrong; but if sociology is a scientific truth, then Jesus of Nazareth preached and practised not only in vain, but against unchangeable Law.

Like Joshua in early days, my heart burns within me and my mind is unpiloted and unanchored. I cannot, being a Christian, accept the inhumanity of political economy and the obliteration of the individual in averages; yet I cannot reconcile modern science with Christ. Everywhere I see the sifting of competition, and nowhere Christian protection of weakness; everywhere dogma adored, and nowhere Christ realised. And again I ask, Which is true—modern society in its class strife and consequent elimination of its weaker elements,

or the brotherhood and communism taught by the Jewish carpenter of Nazareth? Who will answer me?—who will make the dark thing clear?

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